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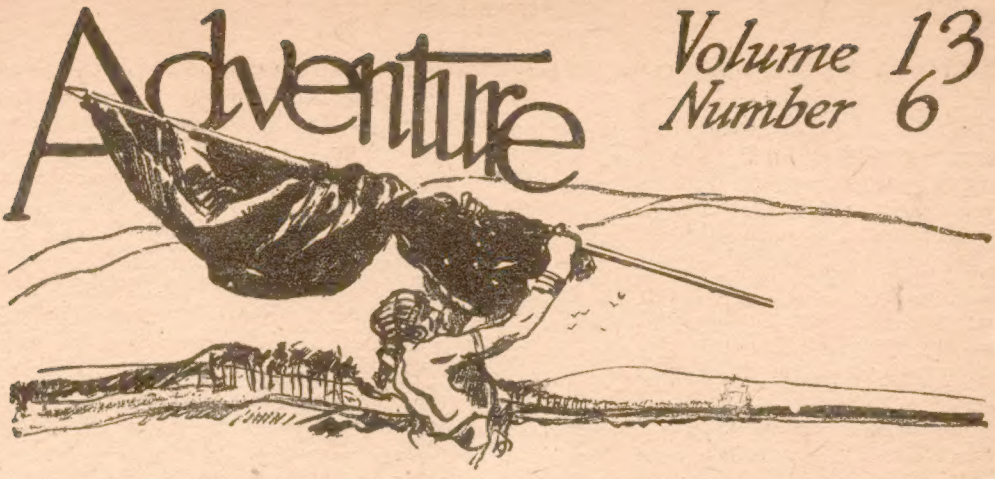

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Vol. 13 Adventure No. 6

April 1917

Fire Mountain

A Two-part Story

Conclusion

Norman Springer

Author of "For Ways That Are Dark," "Gold at Sea," etc.

The First Part of the Story Quickly Retold in Story Form.

SHUT between the four walls of Josiah Smatt's law office, young Martin Blake one afternoon pictured himself aboard a tall, tall bark outward bound for the Port of Adventure. Then frock-coated Dr. Ichi entered to see Mr. Smatt and Martin's law career came to an abrupt end.

The door of Mr. Smatt's private office had scarcely closed on the Jap when into the outer room burst a hunchbacked book-agent who minded Martin more of a man who had sailed strange seas than an agent of printed knowledge. The hunchback left when Mr. Smatt summoned Martin into his sanctum.

"I have a mission for you tonight. You are to deliver this sealed message to a Captain Carew at the Black Cruiser Saloon on the water-front," ordered Smatt.

All might have gone well that night had not Martin's feet led him into a beer emporium en route to the Black Cruiser. For this brought a meeting with a great, red-haired boatswain who told between sobs and drinks of losing his "Little Billy," whom he feared either the police or the Japs had by this time captured.

"What'll I tell the little mate if Billy don't go aboard with me tonight?" he wailed. "He was in his shore clothes, was Billy, an' he looked so smart wi' 'is green hat and——"

To Martin's amazement the boatswain went on to describe his hunchbacked visitor of that afternoon.

"Oh, Billy's safe," said Martin soothingly. "He visited me a short time ago. Followed Dr. Ichi in."

At the mention of the Jap the boatswain's jaw sagged.

"Well, I must be going. You might look for Little Billy down at the water-front. He spoke of seeing Captain Carew——"

"Swiggle me stiff!" roared the boatswain. "You talk of Ichi and then of Wild Bob Carew. Young man, you must be one of 'em!"

His great hands reached for Martin, but that young man found safety on a passing car.

Martin had walked but a short way along the water-front when a voice lifted in an old sea chanty arrested him. And there, sitting high on a post, he spied the little hunchback.

"Well, Little Billy, I've seen a partner of yours, your bosun," Martin began.

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The hunchback lurched forward and grasped Martin's overcoat for support.

"Is he safe?" he asked.

"Yes, and weeping for you."

Whereupon, his mind apparently at rest, Little Billy departed for his ship and Martin strolled into the Black Cruiser.

"You are the messenger, yais?" asked Spulvedo, the proprietor. "You shall see Captain Carew."

Martin was then pushed gently into a dark hallway and led up-stairs by a soft-voiced oriental. In a small bedroom, to which clung an alien taint, the Jap left him.

"I will make prepare for you to see the captain," he purred as he departed.

Suddenly a door slammed below stairs. Then came a scuffle outside Martin's door and a voice cried chokingly—

"Let go—let go of me!"

It was a rich, thrilling voice and it carried an appeal that brought Martin to the door with a bound. He jerked open the door. A fist caught him in the stomach and he went reeling backward. The door slammed shut and the lock clicked.

But Martin had seen. It was a girl, dressed in men's clothes, whom they had imprisoned in the next room!

The Jap entered again, and Martin demanded to know what was going on in this house—who the woman was, and the gang. But he might have asked the walls with as much success.

"You come now see captain," the oriental smiled, and Martin could only obey.

A moment later he found himself blinking in a brightly lighted room at a huge, dominant figure that stood behind a paper-littered desk. To this man Martin cried at once:

"That white woman! She's in this house, a prisoner. Those yellow——"

"What is your business with me?" The heavy voice beat down Martin's words. "I am Captain Carew. You have a message?"

"But the Japs have a white——"

"Enough! You were sent here to deliver a message. Do so."

Martin handed him the envelope. Eagerly the powerful captain ripped it open.

"So this man is a captain of yellow devils, an abductor of girls," thought Martin. "Well, I'll show him! And I'll show Smatt, and Dr. Ichi. They're all crooks!"

"God! What treachery is this?" boomed Carew. "See. These papers are blank! Hey, you staring fool. Answer me!"

"Stop that!" flared Martin. "Make your complaint to Mr. Smatt or Dr. Ichi. That message is just as they gave it to me, sealed."

"You're right I'll ask them. Meanwhile, you stay here."

"I'll not——"

A mountain seemed to drop on Martin. He awoke on the floor in a small room outside Carew's headquarters. Beside himself with rage, he staggered up and crashed against the door. *Crack!* A shot came through the panel.

"If you try again, I shoot lower," came a voice from without, and Martin retreated.

Suddenly to his ears came a faint tapping. Some one in the next room was trying to signal him. Was it the girl? Martin vainly tried to answer the code message. Then there came a scraping outside his window and a well-remembered voice whispered:

"Miss Ruth. Are you there?"

It was the hunchback, Little Billy.

"Don't shoot. This is Martin. She is in the next room."

Little Billy crawled over the sill.

"We've got to work fast" he said. "It may mean your life. Are you with me?"

"I am," answered Martin, thrilling at the feel of the pistol which Little Billy handed him.

The hunchback called out the window to the boatswain below:

"Stand by. We are coming out," and he leaped down into the huge, waiting arms. Martin followed.

From the corner came the sound of a motor engine.

" 'E's back, 'urry!" gasped the boatswain.

Martin and Billy had climbed to the low roof from which they could reach the girl's window. In a moment they had broken open the shutters, hauled her through and all were on the cobblestones once more.

There came a rush of feet in the room above. A flame shot from the window. More shots followed. Police whistles shrilled, far down the street.

The three men, shielding the girl, retreated toward the docks. One of the enemy figures suddenly came straight at them through the gloom, ignoring their shots. Martin knew it was Carew. He aimed, crooked his finger—then the charging man shot. And the darkness enveloped Martin as he fell.

Martin returned to consciousness at sea aboard the brig *Cohasset*. It was Little Billy who told him of the tight squeak he'd had.

"The bullet just plowed over your skull. But now you must meet our 'Happy Family' and hear a story."

They went on deck where Miss Ruth, clad in oilskins like a seaman, was first to greet Martin. And to his amazement he learned that she was the "little mate" of the brig. Below, in the trim cabin, he met the "Old Man," hale, rosy-cheeked, but blind —Ruth's grandfather. The huge boatswain completed the family, and Martin then heard the reason for this cruise.

Some months before, Little Billy had tried to drink Honolulu dry. He awoke in the garret of Kim Chee's saloon where lay piles of cast-off relics, left by generations of sailormen. Poking through the rubbish, Billy had found an old whaleman's log. It told of a voyage into the Bering Sea, of a great deposit of ambergris, cast up on a smoky island by whales and worth more than its weight in gold.

There had been a wreck, the log went on, and the precious barrels of ambergris which had been gathered were hidden away by two survivors in the mouth of a hole which belched steam and led to the earth's heart.

Billy paused in his reading. It seemed the survivors had died, but information regarding the mysterious fire island whereon the ambergris was cached, had gotten to the ears of Wild Bob Carew and Dr. Ichi. The Jap had shipped with the *Cohasset* as a cook at Hakodate.

"Now comes exhibit B," said Billy. He spread forth a parchment covered with numbers.

"This tells where the stuff is hidden. We have solved the code. It reads: 'South end beach—in elephant head—4 starboard—windy cave—2 port—aloft—north corner dry cave.'

"That skin was once in the possession of Mr.

Smatt," explained Billy. "The Jap, Ichi, stole it from us and took it to him. We followed Ichi to Frisco, to Smatt's office, in fact. That's why I played book-agent. I found where you lived and that you had been intrusted with an envelope.

"First Ruth, the bosun and I planned to hold you up. But that fell through. It was when I brushed against you while sitting on the post that I managed to exchange an envelope with the one you carried. But Wild Bob Carew nearly jinxed the whole scheme. You see, he's in love with Ruth."

"I would rather be dead than marry the wretch," broke in Ruth, at which Martin breathed a sigh of content.

"And I would rather have you die," added blind Captain Dabney.

"Well, Ichi knew Carew had a yacht here in Frisco," Billy continued. "So they struck off some agreement. They evidently had turned to Smatt for aid in deciphering the code.

"Carew kidnaped Ruth last night, both because of his mad infatuation and because he meant to force from her the latitude and longitude of the island. He failed. We are now leading their boat, the *Dawn*, by a few hours. They will surely follow."

"Now" said the captain, "we wish to offer you a place in our Happy Family. There will be risks; there may be a great reward. If you——"

"I accept," Martin answered quickly.

"Then it is settled. We will now assign you to a watch," said the old man.

Martin was watching Ruth button her pea-jacket. He dared to think there was a welcome twinkle in the glance she shot at him.

"I would rather be in the mate's watch, sir," Martin decided quickly.

CHAPTER XII

THE PASSAGE

IT WAS the night of April 29, 1915, that Martin Blake, clerk, sat at the *Cohasset's* cabin table and heard the tale of Fire Mountain. It was on the morning of July 6, 1915, that Martin Blake, seaman, bent over the *Cohasset's* foreroyal yard-arm and fisted the canvas, with the shrill whistle of the squall in his ears.

The interim had fashioned a new Martin Blake. In the bronzed and active figure, dungaree clad, sheath-knife on hip, who so casually balanced himself on the swaying foot-rope, there was little in common, so far as outward appearance went, with the dapper, white-faced clerk of yore.

He completed furling the sail. Then he straightened and swept the sea with keen, puckered eyes. It was a scrutiny that was rewarded. Ahead, across the horizon sky, floated a dark smudge, like the smoke-trail of a steamer, and beneath it was a black speck. It was no ship, but land, he knew. It was the expected landfall, the volcanic island, there ahead, and he, of all of the ship's company, first perceived it from his lofty perch.

He sent the welcome hail to the deck below——

"Land ho!"

He leaned over the lee yard-arm, grasped a backstay, and commenced a rapid and precipitous descent to the deck. A few months before, he would have descended laboriously and fearfully by way of the shrouds; sliding down a backstay would then have rubbed his palms raw, and visited giddiness upon him. But now his hands were rope calloused, and his wits height proof. He was now the equal, for agility and daring, with any man on the ship. He had won, without much trouble, a seaman's niche on the ship.

In truth, Martin was to the life born, and he took to the sea like a duck to water. He won quickly through the inevitable series of mishaps that rubbed the greenhorn mark away; and he gleefully measured his progress by his ever growing ability to outpull, outclimb, and outdare the polygot denizens of the brigantine's forecastle.

He had expert coaching to urge his education on apace. He knew the many ropes and their various offices before he was two weeks on board; and he was able to move about aloft, by day or night, quite fearlessly. By the end of the first month he was standing his regular wheel trick. And, as the weeks passed, he gained more than a cursory knowledge of the leverages and wind surfaces that controlled and propelled his little floating world.

He applied himself earnestly to master his new craft. It was the life he had lusted for, and the mere physical spaciousness of his new outlook was a delight. He contrasted it with his former city-cramped, office-ridden existence.

He rejoiced openly as each day lengthened the distance between him and his former slavery. On the very first day he had mounted to the deck to commence work, the morning after the meeting in the cabin, he had enacted a ceremony that, to his own rollicking mind, placed a definite period to his old life. He came on deck bravely bedecked in his new slop-chest clothes, a suit of shiny, unstained dungarees.

He held carefully in his hands a black

derby hat, and a starched collar of the "choker" variety. He carried the articles to the ship's side and cast them into the sea. Then he declaimed his freedom.

"They were the uniform of my servitude —badges of my clerkhood! I have finished with them. Into the ocean they go! Now —ho for the life on the billowy wave!"

"Very good!" the mate applauded his act and words. Her next words were an incisive and frosty command. "You may commence at once your life on the billowy wave! Go for'rd and stand by with the watch!"

Martin went forward, and he began to learn the why and wherefore of things in his new world. He learned to jump to an order called out by that baffling and entrancing person aft, learned to haul in unison, to laugh at hard knocks and grin at pain.

He learned to cultivate humility, and to mount the poop on the lee side when duty took him there. He learned the rigid etiquette of the sea, and addressed that blooming, desirable woman with the formal prefix, "mister."

His body toughened, his mind broadened, his soul expanded. But his heart also expanded, and it was unruly. Ruth was such a jolly chum—off duty. On duty, she was a martinet. Below, she was the merry life of the "happy family." On deck, she lorded it haughtily from the high place of the poop, and answered to the name of "mister!"

The *Cohasset*, Martin discovered, was manned by a total of eighteen souls. Besides the five persons aft, there were a sailmaker, a carpenter, a Chinese cook and ten forecastle hands. His first impression—that the crew was composed of wild men—was partially borne out. Of the ten men in the forecastle, but four were Caucasian—two Portuguese from the Azores, a Finn and an Australian — and the quartet were almost as outlandish in their appearance as the other six of the crew.

The remaining six were foregathered from the length and breadth of the Pacific. There was a Maori from New Zealand, a Koriak tribesman from Kamchatka, two Kanakas, a stray from Ponape, and an Aleut. The six natives, Martin discovered, had all been with the ship for years, were old retainers of Captain Dabney. The four white men, and the cook, who rejoiced in the name of Charley Bo Yip, had been newly shipped in San Francisco.

Martin's watchmates were five of the natives. Martin suspected they composed the mate's watch because they were all old, tractable hands. They were the Maori, Rimoa, a strapping, middle-aged man, Oomak, the Koriak, the man with the tattooed and scarified face whom Martin had seen at the wheel the first day at sea, the two Kanakas, and the Aleut. They talked to each other, he found, in a strange pidgin —a speech composed mainly of verbs and profanity, a language that would have shocked a purist to a premature grave. But Martin found his watchmates to be a brave, capable, though rather silent group.

Martin's initiation into the joys of sea life was a strenuous one. The gale that had sent the *Cohasset* flying from San Francisco, died out, as Ruth had predicted. Followed a couple of days of calm.

Then came another heavy wind, in the boatswain's words, "a snortin' norther," and for three days Martin's watches on deck were cold, wet and hazardous. He blindly followed his watchmates over lurching, slippery decks, in obedience to unintelligible orders. He was rolled about by shipped seas, and his new oilskins received a stern baptism. His clerk's hands became raw and swollen from hauling on wet ropes, his unaccustomed muscles ached cruelly, the sea water smarted the half-healed wound on his head, now covered with a strip of plaster. But he stood the gaff, and worked on. And he was warmly conscious of the unspoken approval of both forecastle and cabin.

During that time of stress he learned something of the sailor's game of carrying on of sail. The wind was fair, and by the blind captain's orders, they held on to every bit of canvas the spars would stand. The little vessel rushed madly through the black, howling nights, and the leaden, fierce days, with every timber protesting the strain, and every piece of cordage adding its shrill, thrummed note to the storm's mighty symphony.

During that time Martin first proved his mettle. He fought down his coward fears, and for the first time ventured aloft, feeling his way through the pitch-black night to the reeling yard-arm, to battle, with his watch, the heavy, threshing sail that required reefing. After the test, when he came below to the warm cabin, he thrilled to the core at his officer's curt praise.

"You'll do!" she muttered in his ear.

But it was not all storm and battle. Quite the reverse. The calm succeeded the storm. Martin came on deck one morning to view a bright sky and a sea of undulating glass. Astern, above the horizon, were fleecy clouds—they afterwards rode high, and became his friends, those mares' tails—and out of that horizon, from the northeast, came occasional light puffs of wind.

Captain Dabney, pacing his familiar poop with firm, sure steps, turned his sightless face constantly to those puffs. There was upon the ship an air of expectancy. And that afternoon Martin beheld an exhibition of the old man's sea-canniness; he suddenly stopped his steady pacing, stood motionless a moment, sniffing of the air astern, and then wheeled upon Ruth.

"To the braces, mister! Here she comes!" he snapped.

She came with tentative, caressing puffs at first, each one a little stronger than the last. Then, with a sigh, a dark blue ripple dancing before her, she arrived, enveloped and passed them.

The brig trembled to the embrace and careened gently, as if nestling into a beloved's arms. About the decks were smiling faces and joyous shouts, and the sails were trimmed with a swinging chantey. For the *Cohasset* had picked up the northeast trades.

THAT night the wind blew, and the next day, and the next, and the next week, and the weeks following. Ever strong and fresh, out of the northeast, came the mighty trade-wind. Nine knots, ten knots, eleven knots—the brig foamed before it, into the southwest, edging eleven knots—the brig foamed before it, into the southwest, edging away always to the westward.

Every sail was spread. Sails were even improvised to supplement the vast press the ship carried, a balloon jib for the bows, and a triangular piece of canvas that the boatswain labored over, and which he spread above the square topsails on the main. He was mightily proud of his handicraft, and walked about, rubbing his huge hands and gazing up at the little sail.

"An inwention o' my own," he proudly confided to Martin. "Swiggle me stiff, if the *Flyin' Cloud* 'as anything on us, for we've rigged a bloody moons'il, says I."

Day by day the air grew warmer, as they neared the tropics. One day they sighted a school of skimming flying fish; that night several flew on board and were delivered into Charley Bo Yip's ready hands, and Martin feasted for the first time upon that dainty morsel. Bonito and porpoise played about the bows.

Martin could not at first understand how a ship that was bound for a distant corner of the cold Bering Sea came to be sailing into the tropics. But the boatswain enlightened him.

"It's a case o' the longest way being the shortest, lad. The winds, says I. We 'ave to make a 'alf circle to the south, using these trades, to make the Siberian coast this time o' year. We're makin' a good passage—swiggle me, if Carew an' his *Dawn* 'ave won past, the way we're sailin'! And the old man reckons seventy days, outside, afore 'e makes 'is landfall o' Fire Mountain. Coming 'ome, now, will be different. We'll sail the great circle, the course the mail-boats follow, an' we'll likely make the passage in 'alf the time. We'll run the easting down, up there in the 'igh latitudes with the westerlies be'ind us."

They were bright, sunny days, those trade-wind days, and wonderful nights. The ship practically sailed herself. A slackening and tightening of sheets, night and morning, and a watch-end trimming of yards, was all the labor required of the crew.

So, regular shipboard work, and Martin's education, went forward. "Chips" plied his cunning hand outside his workshop door; "Sails" spread his work upon the deck abaft the house.

A crusty, talkative, kind-hearted fellow was Sails. He was an old Scot, named MacLean; and the native burr in his speech had been softened by many years of roving. He always took particular pains to inform any listener that he was a MacLean, and that the Clan MacLean was beyond doubt the foremost, the oldest, and the best family that favored this wretched, hopeless world with residence. He hinted darkly at a villainous conspiracy that had deprived him of his estates and lairdships in dear old Stornoway, Bonnie Scotland. He was a pessimist of parts, and he furnished the needed shade that made brighter Martin's carefree existence.

MacLean had followed Captain Dabney for six years—most of the crew were even

longer in the ship—and before joining the *Cohasset*, he had, to Martin's intense interest made a voyage with Wild Bob Carew.

"Och, lad, ye no ken the black heart o' the mon," he would say to Martin. "Wild Bob! 'Tis 'Black Bob' they should call the caird. The black-hearted robber! Aye, I sailed a voyage wi' the deil. Didna' he beach me wi'oot a penny o' my pay on Puka Puka, in the Marquesas? An' didna' I stop there, marooned wi' the natives, till Captain Dabney took me off? Forty-six, five an' thrippence he robbed me of.

"I am a MacLean, and a Laird by rights, but I could no afoord the loss o' that siller. Oh, he is the proud deil! His high stomach could no stand my plain words. Forty quid, odd, he owed me, but I could no hold my tongue when he raided the cutter and made off wi' the shell. The MacLeans were ne'er pirates, ye ken. They are honest men and kirkgoers—though I'll no pretend in the old days they didna' lift a beastie or so.

"I talked up to Carew's face, an' told him a MacLean could no approve such work, an' I told him the MacLeans were better folk than he, for all his high head. Ye ken, lad, the MacLeans are the best folk o' Scotland. When Noah came oot the ark, 'twas the MacLeans met him and helped him to dry land.

"On Puka Puka beach he dumped me, wi'oot my dunnage, and wi'oot a cent o' the siller was due me. Och, he is a bad mon, yon Carew, wi' many a mon's blood on his hands! He has sold his soul to the deil, and Old Nick saves his own. He is a wild mon wi' women, and he is mad aboot the sweet lassie aft. Didna' he try to make off wi' her in Dutch Harbor, three years ago? And didna' the old mon stop him wi' a bullet through the shoulder? And now he tries again in Frisco!

"The lass blooms fairer each day—and Carew's madness grows. Ye'll meet him again, lad, if you stay wi' the ship. Wi' Old Nick to help him, 'tis black fortune he'll bring to the lass, ye'll see." And Sails would croak out dismal prophecies concerning Wild Bob Carew's future activities, so long as Martin would listen.

Indeed, the adventurer of the schooner *Dawn* was ever present in the thoughts of the brig's complement. He was a real and menacing shadow; even Martin was affected by the lowering cloud. The old hands in the crew all knew him personally, and knew of his mad infatuation for their beloved mate. In the cabin, it was accepted that he would cross their path again, though it was hoped that Fire Mountain would be reached and the treasure secured before that event occurred. But, save for an ever-growing indignation against the haughty Englishman, for daring to aspire to Ruth LeMoyne's hand, Martin gave the matter small thought; he was too busy living the moment.

CONCURRENT with his education in seamanship, progressed Martin's instruction in the subtle and disquieting game of hearts. Ruth attended to this particular instruction unconsciously, perhaps, but none the less effectively.

Of course, it was inevitable. When a romantic-minded young man aids in the thrilling rescue of an imprisoned maid, that young man is going to look upon that young woman with more than passing interest. When the maid in question happens to be extremely pretty, his interest is naturally enhanced. When he is thrown into a close shipboard intimacy with her, and discovers her to be at once an exacting tyrant and a jolly chum, when the maid is possessed of a strange and exciting history, and congenial tastes, when she is not unaware of her own excellence, and, at times, not disinclined to coquet a trifle before a young, virile male—then, the romantic young man's blood experiences a permanent rise in temperature, and there are moments when his heart lodges uncomfortably in his throat, and moments when it beats a devil's own tattoo upon his ribs.

And when there are wonderful tropic nights, and bright eyes by his side that outrival the stars overhead, and a glorious tenor voice softly singing songs of love nearby—then, the heady wine of life works a revolution in a romantic young man's being, and in the turmoil he is accorded his first blinding glimpse of the lover's heaven of fulfilled desire, and his first glimpse also of the lover's hell of doubting despair. A man, a maid, a soft, starry night upon the water, a song of love—of course it was inevitable!

Martin's previous experience with the tender passion was not extensive. Circumstance, shyness and fastidiousness had caused him to ignore most of the rather frequent opportunities to philander that his

good looks and lively imagination created, and upon the rare occasions when he had paused, it was because of curiosity—a curiosity quickly sated.

Of course, he had been in love. At twelve years he had betrothed himself to the girl who sat across the aisle, at fifteen, he exchanged rings and vows with a lady of fourteen who lived in the next block, at seventeen he conceived a violent affection for the merry Irish girl who presided over his uncle's range—but Norah scoffed, and remained true to the policeman on the beat, and Martin, for a space, embraced the more violent teachings of anarchy and dreamed with gloomy glee of setting off a dynamite bomb under a certain uniformed prop of law and order.

The uncle died, and Martin was henceforth too busy earning a living to indulge in sentimental adventures. After a time, as he grew to manhood and his existence became more assured, he became a reader of stories; and unconsciously he commenced to measure the girls he met with the entrancing heroines of his fiction. The girls suffered by comparison, and Martin's interest in them remained Platonic.

By degrees he became possessor of that refuge of lonely bachelorhood, an ideal—a dream girl, compounded equally of meditation and books. She was a wonderful girl, Martin's dream girl; she possessed all the virtues, and no faults, and she was very, very beautiful. At first she was a blond maid, and when she framed herself before his eyes, out of the smoke curling upward from his pipe, she was a vision of golden tresses, and rosy cheeks, and clear blue eyes.

But then came Miss Pincher, the manicure maid, to reside at Martin's boarding-house. Miss Pincher's hair was very, very yellow—there were dark hints about that boarding-house board anent royal colors coming out of drug-store bottles—and her eyes were a cold, hard blue. She cast her hard, bold eyes upon Martin. She was a feminist in love. Martin fled horrified before her determined, audacious wooing.

His blond idol was overthrown, his ideal slain. He went to bed with the stark corpse, and awoke to contemplate with satisfaction a new image, a brooding, soulful brunette.

Then, Martin suddenly discovered that his ideal was neither a rosy Daughter of the Dawn, nor a tragic Queen of the Night—she was a merry-faced, neutral-tinted Sister of the Afternoon, a girl with brown hair, so dark as to be black by night, and big brown eyes. A girl with a rich contralto voice that commanded or cajoled in a most distracting fashion. A girl who commanded respect by her mastery of a masculine profession, yet who thereby sacrificed none of her appealing femininity. A girl named Ruth LeMoyne.

There was nothing staid or conservative about the manner of Martin's receiving this intelligence. It was his nature to fall in love with a hard bump, completely and without reservation. He recognized Ruth as the girl of his dreams the very first moment he obtained a good daylight look at her—that is, upon the afternoon he first mounted to the *Cohasset's* deck, and was welcomed by the smiling, lithesome queen of the storm. Blonde and brunette had in that instant been completely erased from his memory; he had recognized in the mate of the *Cohasset* the companion of his fanciful hours, in every feature she was the girl of his dreams.

There are people who say that every person has his, or her, preordained mate somewhere in the world. They say that the true love, the big love, is only possible when these predestined folk meet. They say that love flames instantly at such a meeting, and that the couple will recognize each other though the whole social scale divide them. They say that Love will conquer all obstacles and unite the yearning pair. They are a sentimental, optimistic lot, who thus declaim. Martin, when he thought the matter over, inclined to their belief. Only—the trouble was that Ruth did not seem to exactly recognize or welcome her predestined fate.

But there is another theory of love. Any shiny-pated wise man will give the formula.

"Love at first sight! Bosh!" says the wise man. "Love is merely a strong, complex emotion inspired in persons by propinquity plus occasion!"

Perhaps. Certainly, the emotion Martin felt from the time he spoke his first word to Ruth LeMoyne, was strong enough and complex enough to tinge his every thought. And the propinquity was close enough and piquant enough to flutter the heart of a monk—which Martin was not. And a headlong young man like Martin Blake could be trusted to make the occasion.

He made several occasions. His journey along Cupid's path was filled with the sign-posts of those occasions.

Off duty, Ruth and he were boon companions, during the rather rare hours when she was not in attendance upon the blind captain or asleep. Martin stinted himself of rest, but Ruth was too old a sailor for that.

The dog-watches, and, after they had gained the fine weather, the early hours of the first watch, were their hours of communion. They eagerly discussed books, plays, dreams, the sea, their quest, and themselves. They called each other by their first names, in comradely fashion. Oftentimes Little Billy joined them and enlivened the session with his pungent remarks, or, on the fine evenings, treated them with wonderful, melting songs.

Martin had the uneasy feeling that Little Billy, of all the men on the ship, divined his passion for Ruth. He seemed to feel, also, that Little Billy was, in a sense, a rival; with a lover's insight, he read the dumb adoration in the hunchback's eyes whenever the latter looked at, or spoke of, the mate.

But, of course, Ruth knew what was in Martin's mind and heart. Trust a daughter of Eve to read the light in a man's eyes, be she ever so unpractised by experience. It is her heritage. Nor did Martin attempt concealment of his love for very long. A dashing onslaught was Martin's nature.

Ruth teased him and deftly parried his crude attempts to make the grand passion the sole topic of their chats. She would hold him at arm's length, and then for a swift moment drop her guard. It would be but a trifle—a fugitive touching of shoulders, perhaps—but it would shake Martin to his soul.

She would hold their talk to commonplaces, and then, as their hour ended, would transfix him with a fleeting glance that seemed to bear more than a message of friendship, and he would stand looking after her, weak and gasping, with thumping heart.

One evening they stood together on the forecastle head, watching the setting sun. Sky and sea, to the west, were ablaze for a brief space with ever-changing gorgeous colors. The sheer beauty of the scene, added to the disturbing nearness of his heart's wish, forced Martin's rose-tinted thoughts to speech.

"I see our future there, Ruth," he said, pointing to the rioting sunset colors. "See—that golden, castle-shaped cloud! We shall live there. Those orange-and-purple billows surrounding are our broad meadows. It is the country we are bound for, the land of happiness, and its name is——"

"Its name is 'dreamland'!" finished Ruth, with a light laugh. "And never will you arrive at your voyage's end, friend Martin, for 'dreamland' is always over the horizon."

She looked directly into Martin's eyes; the brief dusk was upon them, and her face was a soft, wavering outline, but her eyes were aglow with the gleam that set Martin's blood afire. Her eyes seemed to bear a message from the Ruth that lived below the surface Ruth—from the newly stirring woman beneath the girlish breast.

It was a challenge, that brief glance. It made Martin catch his breath. He choked upon the words that tried tumultuously to burst from his lips.

"Oh, Ruth, let me tell you—" he commenced.

Her laugh interrupted him again, and the eyes he looked into were again the merry, teasing eyes of his comrade. With her next words she wilfully misunderstood him and his allusion concerning the sunset.

"Indeed, Martin, that cloud the sunset lightened is shaped nothing like Fire Mountain, which is a very gloomy looking place, and one I should not like to take up residence in. And no bright meadows surround it—only the gray, foggy sea. Hardly a land of happiness. Though, indeed, if we salvage that treasure, we will have the means, each of us, to buy the happiness money provides."

"Confound Fire Mountain and its treasure!" exclaimed Martin. "You know I didn't mean that, Ruth! I was talking figuratively, poetically, the way Little Billy talks. I meant just you and I, and that sunset was the symbol of our love."

But he was talking to the air. Ruth was speeding aft, her light laughter rippling behind her.

Another night, when the brig was near the southern limit of her long traverse, they stood in the shadow, at the break of the poop, and together scanned the splendid sky. Ruth was the teacher; she knew each blazing constellation, and she pointed them out for Martin's benefit. But Martin, it must be admitted, was more interested by

the pure profile revealed by a slanting moonbeam than by the details of astronomy and his mumbled, half-conscious replies revealed his inattention.

After a while, she gave over the lesson, and they stood silent, side by side, leaning on the rail, captivated by the witchery of the tropic night.

The heavens were packed with the big, blazing stars of the low latitudes, and the round moon, low on the horizon, cut the dark, quiet sea with a wide path of silver light. Aloft, the steady breeze hummed softly; and the ship broke her way through the water with a low, even purr, and the sea curled away from the forefoot like an undulating silver serpent. The wake was a lane of moonlight, barred by golden streaks of phosphorescence.

On the ship, the decks were a patchwork of bright, eerie light and black shadow. The bellying sails and the woof of cordage aloft, seemed unsubstantial, like a gossamer weaving. The quiet ship noises, and the subdued murmur of voices from forward seemed unreal, uncanny.

The unearthly beauty of the night touched strange fancies to life in Martin's mind—he was on a phantom ship, sailing on an unreal sea. The desirable, disturbing presence so close to his side enhanced his agitation.

His shoulder touched her shoulder, and he could feel the gentle rise and fall of her breast, as she breathed. The bodily contact made his head swim. When she raised her head to stare at the sky, a fugitive moonbeam caressed her face and touched her briefly with a wondrous beauty. Her curved, parted lips were almost within reach of his own at such instants; he had but to bend swiftly forward! Martin was all atremble at the daring thought, and he clutched the rail to steady himself.

Behind them, a golden voice suddenly commenced to sing an age-old song of love, "Annie Laurie."

Softly the hunchback sang; his voice seemed to melt into and become one with the hum of the breeze aloft and the snore of the forefoot thrusting apart the waters. It seemed to Martin that the whole world was singing, singing of love. His heart thumped, his breath came quickly, pinpoints of light swam before his eyes.

The girl trembled against his shoulder. Martin leaned eagerly forward, and their eyes met. They both stiffened at that electric contact. His eyes were ablaze with passion, purposeful, masterful; and in her eyes he again glimpsed the fresh-awakened woman, beckoning, elusive, fearful. For a brief instant they stared at each other, man and woman, souls bared. But that blinding moment seemed to Martin to encompass eternity. The songster's liquid notes fell about them, and they were enthralled.

The song ended. Quite without conscious movement, Martin put his arms about Ruth and drew her into a close embrace. He pressed his hot lips to hers, and with a thrill so keen it felt like a stab, he realized her lips returned the pressure.

It lasted but a second, this heaven. The girl burst backward out of his embrace. Martin's arms fell to his sides, nerveless, and he stood panting, tongue-tied with emotion. Nor did he have the chance to master himself and speak the words he wished, for Ruth, with a half sob, half laugh, turned and sped across the deck, and through the open alleyway door, into the cabin.

The next watch Ruth stood upon her dignity, and her manner was unusually haughty toward her slave. And the next day, in the dog-watch, he discovered that the old comradeship was fled. She was shy and silent, and she listened to his stammered apology with averted eyes and pink ears.

When Martin attempted to supplement his apology with ardent words, she fled straightway. And never again during the passage did Martin find an opportunity to avow his love. He discovered that somehow Little Billy, or the boatswain, or Captain Dabney were always present at their talks. Her elusiveness made him very wretched at times. But then, occasionally, he would surprise her looking at him, and the light in her eyes would send him to the seventh heaven of delight.

THERE came the day when the little vessel reached the southern point of the great arc she was sailing across the Pacific. Martin came on deck to find the bows turned northward, toward the Bering, and the yards braced sharp to catch the slant from the dying trades.

The *Cohasset* raced northward, though not as swiftly as she had raced southward.

The winds were light, though generally fair, and the brig made the most of them.

The weather grew steadily cooler; the brilliant tropics were left behind, and they entered the gray wastes of the North Pacific. Forward and aft were smiling faces and optimistic prophecies, for the ship was making a record passage. The captain's original estimate of seventy days between departure and landfall was steadily pared by the hopeful ones. The boatswain, especially, was delighted.

"Seventy days! Huh!" he declared. "Why, swiggle me stiff, we'll take the days off that, or my name ain't Tom 'Enery! 'Ere we are, forty-one days out, an' al-already we're in sight o' ice, an' runnin' free over the nawstiest bit o' water between 'ere an' the 'Orn! It'll be Bering Sea afore the week out, lad! And afore another week, we'll 'ave fetched the bloody wolcano and got away again with that grease! Bob Carew? Huh—the *Dawn* may 'ave the 'eels of us—though, swiggle me, what with my moons'il, an' that balloon jib, I'd want a tryout afore admitting it final—but it ain't on the cards that Carew 'as 'ad our luck with the winds. 'E's somewhere a week or two astern o' us, I bet. We'll 'ave the bleedin' swag, an' be 'alf way 'ome, before 'e lifts Fire Mountain—if he does know where the bloomin' place is!

"Ow, lad, just think o' all that money in a lump o' ruddy grease! Ow, what a snorkin' fine time I'll 'ave, when we get back to Frisco! 'Am an' eggs, an' a bottle o' wine every bloomin' meal for a week! Regular toff, I'll be, swiggle me—with one of them fancy girls adancin', and one o' them long-haired blokes afiddlin' while I scoffs!"

Only old Sails declined to be heartened by bright expectations. He wagged his gray head solemnly.

"The passage is no made till we are standing off yon island," he warned Martin. "Aye, well I remember the smoking mountain. Didna' that big, red loon aft split a new t'gan'-s'il the very next day, wi' his crazy carrying on of sail? Aye, I mind the place—a drear place, lad, wi' an evil face. I dinna like to see the lassie gang ashore there, for all the siller ye say the stuff is worth, an' I ken well she'll be in the first boat. 'Tis a wicked place, the fire mount, and I ha' dreamed thrice o' the feyed. Nay, I'll tell ye no more, lad. But do you give no mind to yon talk o' Bob Carew being left behind. He is the de'il's son, and the old boy helps his own. But keep ye a sharp eye on the lass."

No more than this half mystical jargon could Martin extract from the dour Scot. MacLean would shake his head and mumble that feydom brooded over the brig and hint darkly of battle and bloodshed.

That night, in the privacy of their berth, Martin mentioned MacLean's dismal croakings to Little Billy. He was minded to jest about the pessimist, but, to his great surprise, the hunchback listened to his recountal with a very grave face. But after a moment Little Billy's smile returned, and he explained.

"Sails is a Highland Scot," he told Martin. "Of course he is superstitious, as well as a constitutional croaker. He claims to be a seventh son, or something like that, and to be able to foretell death. When he speaks of a 'feyed' man, he means one over whom he sees hovering the shadow of death. He didn't say who was feyed, did he?"

"No, he wouldn't talk further," answered Martin. "What bosh!"

"Yes, of course," assented Little Billy. "You and I, with our minds freed of superstition, may laugh—but Sails, I think, believes in his visions. And, to tell you the truth, your words gave me something of a start at first. I have known MacLean a long time, you know. Last voyage, he told me one day that Lomai, a Fiji boy, was feyed, and that very night Lomai fell from the royal yard and was smashed to death on the deck. And once before that, before I became one of the happy family, he foretold a death to the captain. I am glad you told me about this. He didn't mention a name?"

"No. Just said he had dreamed three time of the feyed," said Martin, impressed in spite of himself.

"I'll speak to him, myself," went on Little Billy. "Won't do any good, though. He only tells one person of his foresight, and he has chosen you this time. But I wish—oh, what is wrong with us! Of course it is bosh! The old grumbler has indigestion from eating too much. I am going to read awhile, Martin, if the light won't bother you. Don't feel sleepy."

The hunchback clambered into his upper bunk and composed himself, book in hand. Martin finished his disrobing and rolled into his bunk, beneath the other. He was tired,

but he didn't go to sleep directly. His mind was busy. Not with thoughts of Sails and his ghostly warning—Martin had not been long enough at sea to be tinged with the sailor's inevitable superstition, and he was stanchly skeptical of supernatural warnings. Martin lay awake thinking of the deformed little man, ostensibly reading, a few feet above him.

For some nights, now, the hunchback had read late of nights, because he "didn't feel sleepy." Daily, Little Billy's lean face grew more lined and aged; in the past week his appearance had taken on a half-score years. He still retained his smile, but it was even wan at times. In his eyes lurked misery. Martin knew that the books he took to bed were mainly a subterfuge to enable Little Billy to keep the light burning. For Little Billy was waging a battle with his ancient enemy, and he had grown afraid of the dark.

A week before, he had abruptly said to Martin:

"I gave the key of the medicine-chest to Ruth today. I won't be able to get at *that* booze, anyway." To Martin's startled look, he added: "I want you to know, so you won't be surprised by the capers I am liable to cut for a while. You see, I am dancing to old Fiddler Booze's tune. I want to go on a drunk—every part of me craves alcohol. And I am determined to keep sober.

"Oh, it is nothing to startle you, Martin. I never get violent. Only, I'll be in plain hell for a couple of weeks. Then the craving will go away, to return at ever shorter intervals, until I do get ashore on a good bust. No, I'll keep sober till I reach shore again—whatever comes. No raiding the bosun's locker for shellac or wood-alcohol this voyage."

"Good Lord, you wouldn't do that!" exclaimed Martin.

"Oh, yes—I did it once," confessed Little Billy easily. "Indeed, a swig of shellac punch is drink for the gods; my very soul writhes now at the thought of it. But, I'll admit, the wood-alcohol beverage conceals complications. It was the captain, and his little stomach-pump, that brought me to that time. But no more of such frolicking on board ship. That episode occurred during my first year with Captain Dabney. Never since have I succumbed to the craving while at sea. Oh, I'll be all right this time—only don't be startled if you hear me talking to myself, or roaming about in the middle of the night."

That was all that passed between them. But during the days following Martin's eyes often rested on the other with curiosity and sympathy. It was a new experience for Martin, to be room-mated with a dipsomaniac, and besides Little Billy had grown to be a very dear friend, indeed. Everybody on the ship loved the sunny hunchback.

Little Billy's happy face grew bleak, and many fine lines appeared about the corners of his eyes and mouth. He was suffering keenly, Martin knew. Even now, he could hear the uneasy, labored breathing of the man in the bunk above.

It was a strange, changeable, eager face, Little Billy had. It seemed to vary in age according to the hunchback's mood; these days he looked forty, but Martin had seen him appear a youthful twenty during an exceptionally happy moment. Actually, Martin learned during the passage, Little Billy Corcoran's age was thirty-one.

He learned, moreover, that Little Billy was the son, and sole surviving relative, of Judge Corcoran, a famous California politician in his day. Judge Corcoran had been a noted "good fellow" and a famous man with the bottle. And his son was a hunchback and a dipsomaniac. Little Billy was blessed with a fine mind, and he had taken his degree at Yale, but throughout his hectic life the thirst he was born with proved his undoing.

"I am an oddity among a nation of self-made men," Little Billy once told Martin. "They all commenced at the bottom and ascended fortune's ladder, whereas I started at the top and descended. And what a descent! I hit every rung of that ladder with a heavy bump, and jarred Old Lady Grundy every time. I was the crying scandal, the horrible example, of my native heath. That old rogue, my father, used to boast that he never got drunk—I used to boast that I never got sober. Finally I bumped my last bump and found myself at the bottom. And there I stayed, until Captain Dabney, and the dear girl, pulled me out of the mire."

Almost literally true, this last, for Martin learned that five years before, Captain Dabney had salvaged Little Billy off the beach at Suva, a dreadful scarecrow of a man, and Ruth's nursing, and the clean sea

life, had built a new William Corcoran. But the appetite for the drink was uneradicable, and the genial hunchback's life was a series of losing battles with his hereditary curse.

BUT the boatswain was proved a poor prophet. Not that week, nor the next, did they reach Fire Mountain. The *Cohasset* crossed the path of the Orient mail-packets, the great circle sailers, and they entered their last stretch of Pacific sailing, above the forty-eighth parallel.

Captain Dabney's objective was the little-used gateway to the Bering that lies between Copper Island and the outlying Aleuts. They sailed upon a wild and desolate waste of leaden sea; a sea shrouded frequently with fog, and plentifully populated with those shipmen's horrors, footloose icebergs. And their fair sailing abruptly terminated.

It began in the space of a watch. The glass tumbled, the wind hauled around to foul, and it began to blow viciously. For days they rode hove to.

That was but the beginning. For weeks, they obtained only an occasional favorable slant of wind, and these, as often as not, in the shape of short, sharp gales. They made the most of them; the blind man on the poop coached cannily, and Ruth and the boatswain carried on to the limit.

Martin, once again, as in the days leaving San Francisco, saw the smother of canvas fill the decks with water. But such sailing was rare, and of short duration. Always, succeeding, came the heavy slap in the face from the fierce wind god of the North.

Martin labored mightily, in company with his fellows, it being a constant round of "reef, shake out, and come about." The days were sharp, and the nights bitter cold —though, as they won northward, and the season advanced, the days grew steadily longer.

Went glimmering, as the weeks passed, the high hopes of a record passage. Disappeared, also, the assurance of recovering the treasure. The shadow of Wild Bob Carew fell between them and their destination.

When one day the capricious wind drove them fairly past Copper Island, and they plunged into the foggy, ill-charted reaches of the Bering, their jubilation was tempered with a note of pessimism. They debated, in the *Cohasset's* cabin, whether the adventurer of the *Dawn* had been beforehand; and Captain Dabney discussed his plans for proceeding on to the Kamchatka coast for trading in case they discovered Fire Mountain to be despoiled.

The situation, it seemed to Martin, resolved itself to this: If Carew knew the latitude and longtitude of the smoking mountain—and being familiar with the Bering Sea, all hands admitted that he might well know it—the ambergris was most certainly lost to them, unless, as was most unlikely, the *Dawn* had had even worse luck with the weather than the *Cohasset*. But if Carew did not know Fire Mountain's location, they had a chance, though Carew was probably cruising adjacent waters, on the lookout for them—and if they encountered him, they might prepare to resist a piracy.

Martin, in truth, had a secret hope that they might encounter Carew's schooner. He had a healthy lust for trouble and a scorn bred of ignorance for the Japanese crew of the *Dawn*. He harbored a grudge against the *Dawn's* redoubtable skipper. Ruth was the kernel of that grudge.

And, oddly enough, he had a queer companion also wishing they might be compelled to battle the Japanese. It was none other than Charley Bo Yip, the cook.

Yip hated the Japanese with a furious hatred, if the garbled words that dropped from his smiling lips were to be believed. He hated them individually and nationally. And he sharpened, ostentatiously, a meat-cleaver, and proclaimed his intention of procuring a Jap's head as a trophy, should they have trouble.

"Me China boy, all same Melican," he told Martin, as he industriously turned the grindstone beneath the cleaver's edge. "Me like all same lepublic—me fight like devil all same time when China war. Now Jap he come take China. No good. Me kill um Jap. Velly good. All same chop um head, chop, chop!"

And Yip waved his cleaver over his head, and a seraphic smile lighted his bland, unwarlike face.

At last, on the sixty-eighth day of the passage, Martin came on deck for the morning watch and found the vessel bouncing along under unaccustomed blue skies, and with a fair breeze. The boatswain went below, swiggling himself very stiff with the

fervent hope that no bleeding Jonah would interrupt the course before the next eight bells, and Ruth took up an expectant watch, with the glasses handy. Captain Dabney also kept the deck. Martin knew the landfall was expected.

At the middle of the watch, a squall sent Martin racing aloft to furl the royal. It was then that his sea-sharpened sight raised the land.

His hail to the deck aroused the ship. By the time he had finished his descent from aloft, all hands were at the rail, endeavoring each to pick up the distant speck.

Four bells had gone while he was aloft, and he strode aft to take his wheel. As he passed along the poop, he heard Ruth say—

"If the breeze holds, we'll be inside in a couple of hours."

Captain Dabney turned his old, sea-wise face to the wind. After a moment, he shook his head.

"I feel fog," he said.

CHAPTER XIII

FIRE MOUNTAIN

WITHIN the hour, Captain Dabney's words bore fruit. The spanking ten-knot breeze dropped abruptly to a gentle four-knot power. Then in the twinkling of an eye, as it were, the fog enveloped them.

Martin, at the wheel, was straining his eyes, trying to make out the land ahead that he had seen from aloft. Abruptly before his eyes rose a wall of opaque gray.

It was a typical Smoky Sea fog, a wet, dense, Bering blanket. From his station near the stern, Martin could not see the rail at the break of the poop, could hardly, indeed, discern objects a dozen paces distant. Familiar figures, entering his circle of vision, loomed gigantic and grotesque. The *Cohasset* sailed over a ghostly sea, whose quiet was broken only by the harsh squawking of sea-birds flying high overhead.

Of recent weeks, Martin had become accustomed to fog. But there was about this fog a peculiarity foreign to his experience, though he had been informed during the cabin talks of the frequent occurrence of this particular brand of mist in these waters. For, though Martin, standing on deck, was surrounded by an impervious wall of fog that pressed upon him, though he could not see the water overside or forward for a quarter of the little vessel's length, yet he could bend back his head and see quite plainly the round ball of the sun glowing dully through the whitening mist overhead.

He understood the wherefor. The fog was a low-lying bank, and thirty feet or so above his head it ended. He could not, from the wheel, distinguish the upper hamper, but he knew the topmasts were free of the mist that shrouded the deck. Presently, from overhead, and ghostily piercing the gray veil, came Ruth's clear hail. She ordered him to shift the course a couple of points. So he knew his officer was aloft, up there in the sunshine, in a position that enabled her to direct their course.

In such a fashion, creeping through the fog, the *Cohasset* came at last to Fire Mountain. The fog delayed, but did not daunt, the mariners of the happy family.

After the hurried noon meal, Ruth returned to her station aloft and resumed conning the vessel by remembered landmarks on the mountain's face. On deck, Martin, in company with his fellows, labored under the boatswain's lurid driving to prepare the ship for anchoring. They cockbilled the great hooks, overhauled the cables, and coiled down running braces and halyards; for, said the captain, attending upon their bustle with his abnormally sharp ears:

"It's a wide breach in the reef that makes the cove, and the water is deep right up to the beach. The lass should have no trouble conning us in, for she has a clean view aloft. But just have everything ready for quick work, bosun, in case we get into trouble."

Hence it was that Martin, a-tingle though he was with curiosity, found no opportunity to run aloft into the sunshine and view the place he had talked and dreamed so much about. Other men went aloft on ship's work, but Martin's duty kept him racing about the wet decks.

The fog pressed closer upon them as the day advanced, it seemed to Martin. It required an effort of his imagination to admit that a few feet above him the sun shone.

The ship seemed to be crawling blindly about in a limitless void. Anon would come Ruth's cheering and mellow halloo, cleaving sweetly through the drab enveloping blanket, and seeming to Martin's eager ears to be a good fairy's voice from another world.

The screaming of the sea-birds grew in volume—but not a wing did Martin spy.

The air appeared to take on an irritating taint; the fog tasted smoky.

Added to other sounds, slowly grew a great surging rumble. Aided by Ruth's calls, Martin knew he heard the sea beating against the reef that encircled the mountain; but he saw nothing overside but that dead gray wall.

The upper canvas was clewed up and left hanging, and the brig's slow pace became perceptibly slower.

A boat was lowered, and Little Billy was pulled into the void ahead; and directly his musical chant came back, as he sounded their path with the lead.

The surging thunder came from both sides, and Martin knew they were entering the haven. The voices of Ruth and Little Billy brought echoes from the giant sounding-board ahead.

A sharp command from Captain Dabney, a moment's rush of work to the accompaniment of a deal of fiery swiggling on the boatswain's part, the ship lost way and rounded up, the anchor dropped with a dull *plub*, the chain roared through the hawse-pipe and brought a vastly multiplied echoing roar from the invisible cliffs, and there was a sudden, myriad-voiced screeching from the startled birds. Succeeded an ominous, oppressive quiet, broken only by the dull thunder of the surf.

Martin drew a long breath and stared at the blank, impervious void about him.

"So this," he thought whimsically, "is the terrible Fire Mountain!" He was excitedly happy.

A few moments later, when he went aloft to furl sail, he saw the shore, this unmarked unknown rock that had filled his thoughts for months.

It was a sudden and eery transition as he mounted the rigging, from gray night to sunshine in the space of a few ratlines. On the foretopgallant-yard he was above the fog, the very roof of the bank lying a dozen feet below. The decks were concealed from him.

Overhead, the sky was blue and the gulls drove past and circled about in white, screaming clouds. Before him, and on either side, not five hundred yards distant, loomed the mountain.

Martin stared intently and curiously, and, despite himself, that bleak and desolate outlook sobered the gaiety of his mood. On three sides the rock reared skyward, bare and black, with never a hint of vegetation.

The mountain formed a rough cone; some two thousand feet overhead was the summit, and over it hovered a cloud of white steam vapor, and a twisting column of curiously yellow-brown smoke that trailed away lazily on a light wind. Martin, staring at it, decided that the air he breathed did have an alien, a sulfurous taint.

There were no raw fissures about the crater edge, and no evidence beyond the rather thin volume of smoke that the volcano contained life. Yet Martin seemed to hear, above the thunder of the surf in the fog beneath him, a distant, ominous rumbling, as if the slumbering Vulcan of the mountain were snoring in his sleep.

But it was the mountainside that longest held Martin's fascinated gaze. For, in her fiery past, the volcano had clad her flanks with black lava that was now molded into a vast chaos of fantastic architecture and sculptures. It was as if an army of crazy artists had here expended their lunatic energies.

He saw huge, round towers, leaning all awry; a vast pile fashioned like a church front, with twin steeples canting drunkenly; the tremendous columns the captain had told him of; jutting masses that hinted in their half-formed outlines of gigantic, crouching beasts. And everywhere in that weird field of shapes were the openings of caves—dark blots in the black stone.

The mountain was truly a sponge-like labyrinth, Martin perceived. He could not see the strip of beach, however, or the cavern mouth, shaped like an elephant's head, of the whaleman's log. The fog hid them from view.

But what he did see was sufficient. It was an evil landscape. It loomed black and forbidding against the background of blue sky, and the sun failed to lighten the aspect. It threatened. The stark desolateness of the place was enhanced by the wild cawing of the gulls and the mournful booming of the sea upon the reef.

Martin was depressed, as by a foreboding of ill fortune. He turned to Rimoa, who was on the yard-arm with him, and spoke with forced lightness—

"A cheerful-looking place, eh, Rimoa?"

The Maori shuddered, and there was fear in his eyes.

"No like!" he said. "This place bad, bad, bad!"

Then, as they bent to their work, the fog-bank suddenly lifted, enveloped them, and hid the black mountain from view.

CHAPTER XIV

OUT OF THE FOG

"NO, WE'LL not go ashore tonight," stated Captain Dabney at supper. "We would only lose ourselves blundering about in this fog. If the stuff is still there, it will keep until tomorrow. In the morning we'll have a try, whether the fog has lifted or not."

"We'll find the junk unless Wild Bob and Ichi have beaten us to it," said Little Billy. "Hope they are not snugged close by behind this blooming curtain."

"No danger of that," answered Ruth. "If the *Dawn* had been anywhere near us, I would have raised her topmasts above the bank. I didn't, so she is neither outside nor inside. They have either been here and gone, or they never arrived. In either case, I am thankful for Carew's absence. Shall we stand watch and watch tonight, captain?"

"Hardly necessary," said the captain. "Make it an anchor watch. Guess you'll welcome a couple of extra hours in your bunks. Let's see, Martin, you stand watch with the afterguard; that will make four of you—Ruth, Bosun, Little Billy, and Martin. Have the fo'c's'le stand watch in batches of two. Make Chips and Sails—they have been farmers the passage — stand watch and watch. That will make four hands on deck at a time—plenty for any sudden emergency. But if the fog lifts during the night, rouse the ship at once and we'll set off for the beach. Got your directions ready, Billy?"

"Yes, in my pocket," said the hunchback. "But I venture that we all know them by heart."

"If the fog lifts, wind may follow," added the captain. "If it breezes up from the south we may have to hike out of here in a hurry. How much chain is out? Forty-five? Well, have the bosun clap the devil's claw on ahead of the shackle, and loosen the pin, in case we have to drop the cable. And—all hands at four o'clock."

In the lottery that presently followed, Martin drew the watch from two to four in the morning. Little Billy's paper called for from twelve to two. Ruth and the boatswain divided the first four hours.

Before he turned in, Martin went forward to discover which of the forecastle hands would share his vigil. When he came abreast the galley door, where a beam of light shining out lighted dimly a small patch of the pervading, foggy murk, he encountered Sails.

MacLean was standing in the light, bitterly recounting his troubles to the cheerfully grinning Charley Bo Yip. Martin paused, and was promptly aware that Sails had transferred his flow of words to the newcomer, as being a better audience than the unresponsive Chinaman.

Martin gathered that Sails was to stand the middle watch, and that he was aggrieved that the best blood of Scotland had been bested in a game of chance by a blanked squareheaded ship's carpenter, who had, it seemed, won the right to stand the earlier watch. And, in any case, it was sacrilege to violate the night's rest of a MacLean. And a sailmaker was a dash-blanked tradesman and should never be blankety well asked to stand a watch under any dashed circumstances! So quoth Sails.

Martin commiserated with the other.

"You'll be on watch with me, Sails," he concluded. "I have the two to four. Little Billy has the earlier half of the watch."

"Little Billy!" echoed Sails. "Did ye say Little Billy, lad?" His belligerent voice dropped to a hoarse whisper. "*Och*, lad—Little Billy?"

"Why, yes. What is wrong with that?" answered Martin.

Suddenly Sails raised an arm and shook a clenched fist at the mountain that brooded invisible behind the fog curtain.

"*Och*, ye black de'il's kirk!" he declaimed. "Ye blood-sucker! The MacLean's curse on ye!"

He stood in relief against the muddy background, his features dimly lighted by the ray from the galley lamp, wisps of fog eddying about his gray head and beard, his features wild and passion-working. And he cursed the Fire Mountain. It was unreal, unearthly, a scene from another age. But Martin felt a superstitious thrill.

"Great Scott! What is the matter?" he cried, startled.

MacLean lowered his arm, and his shoulders slumped despondently. He mumbled to himself. Then, in answer to Martin, he said:

"Little Billy—*och*, 'tis Little Billy, dear Billy! 'Tis feydom, lad!" And he turned abruptly, strode forward, and was lost in the fog.

When Martin reached aft again, he intended to tell Little Billy about MacLean's strange behavior. He found the hunchback restlessly pacing the tiny floor space of their common room. Little Billy lifted a haggard face as Martin entered.

"Hello, Martin," he said. "I was waiting up for you. Here—keep these for me, will you?" He extended a bunch of keys. "I'm feeling extra dry tonight, and I don't want to be tempted by knowing I have the key to the medicine-chest in my pocket. Whenever I pass that confounded box, I think of the two quarts of booze inside, and my tongue swells. Just keep the keys till tomorrow, will you? Ruth kept them for me when I had my last big thirst, a few weeks ago—remember? But I would rather you kept them this time. I don't want her to know I'm having a hard time. She makes such a fuss over me, stuffs me with pills, and makes me drink that vile sassafras tea."

Martin dropped the bunch of keys into his trousers pocket. He regarded Little Billy with sympathy. For the past few days, the hunchback had again been engaged in a bout with his ancient enemy. Little Billy was fighting manfully, but the strain was telling, aging his mobile face, making rare his sunny smile and whimsical banter. Martin keenly felt the other's suffering, for he had learned to love the little cripple.

"Cheer up, Billy!" he said. "A better day coming."

"Oh, sure! Don't worry about me," responded Little Billy. "Turn in and get your sleep. I'm for the bunk, too—but I guess I'll read a bit before I turn the lamp down. Lord, don't I wish I owned a saloon! Well, tomorrow we'll find the ambergris, and I'll have money enough to drink myself peacefully to death—providing that devil, Carew, hasn't been before us to this cheerful spot. Good night."

Clambering into his bunk, the little man composed himself to a pretense of reading.

Martin decided he would not trouble Little Billy with a recital of MacLean's outburst. The poor fellow's mind was feverish enough without being bothered with the old Scotchman's wild, nonsensical raving. Martin knew the hunchback would consider gravely, and be disturbed, if he spoke. Little Billy apparently had some faith in Sails' mystical foresight.

In truth, Martin, himself, was impressed and oppressed by the Scot's obscure hints of evil to come—they fitted so well with the wild and gloomy face of the volcano and the depressing fog. Martin was half ashamed of his dread of something he could not name; but he turned in standing, removing only his shoes and loosening his belt, before crawling into his bunk and drawing the blankets over him.

A STRANGE hand grasping his shoulder brought Martin out of deep sleep to instant consciousness. The light still burned in the room, and his opening eyes first rested on the tin clock hanging on the wall opposite. It was one o'clock.

The hand that shook him belonged to MacLean. The old man was bending over him with the white face of one who has seen a ghost.

"He's gone!" he softly exclaimed, before Martin could frame a question.

Startled, Martin sat up and swung his legs outboard.

"What—Little Billy?" A glance showed him the upper bunk was empty.

"Aye—Billy," responded Sails. "*Och*, 'tis a bad night ootdoors, lad—a thick, dark night. And Billy's gone. Didna' I see him in the dark, and wearing the black shroud, these months agone! He was feyed! Yon mount is the de'il's home, and others——"

"What are you talking about?" interrupted Martin impatiently. "What nonsense! Isn't Little Billy on deck? Isn't he on watch?"

"On watch? Aye, who kens where he watches now? He's gone, I tell ye!" hissed the old man fiercely. And then, apparently observing Martin's bewilderment, he went on: "He has disappeared from deck. *Och*, I can no say how! The Powers o' Darkness can no be seen through, and he was under the black shroud! I saw him at one bell when he came for'rd and routed me oot the galley where I was taking a wee spell.

"*Och*, 'tis a black, bad night the night. Ye canna' see your hand afore ye. And Billy went aft, and I leaned on the rail, and listened—listened, for I couldna' see. And I heard *It*! Aye, I kenned 'twas *It*, for 'twas

no the soond o' the waves, nor the calling o' the birds, nor the splash o' anything that lives in the sea. I kenned it was *It*. Hadna' I seen the shroud? Soonded like an oar stroke. 'Twas the Prince o' Evil soonding his way, a-coming wi' his shroud. *Och!* I run aft to tell Billy, and I tell ye, lad, Little Billy was gone!"

MacLean leaned forward, grunting his words earnestly, his face working with superstitious fear.

"Oh, nonsense!" exclaimed Martin. "You make me tired with your eternal 'fey' business. Little Billy is somewhere around the deck—probably seeking you, this minute."

"He's gone!" reiterated Sails. "I searched, I tell ye! I got my lantern, and I looked all aboot the poop, and all aboot the decks, clear for'rd, and I sang oot as loud as I could wi'oot rousing all hands—and no hide or hair o' Billy could I find. *Och*, he's gone, I tell ye, lad. Didna' I see him lying stark in the dark place, wi' the black shroud over him. The MacLeans ha' the sight, lad, and I am the seventh son."

"All right, all right! Don't chatter so loud, you'll awaken everybody," interrupted Martin. He rubbed the sleep out of his eyes, and bent over and pulled on his shoes. "I'll go on deck with you, and of course Little Billy will give us the laugh."

But Martin was, in fact, a little bit impressed by the old sailmaker's earnest conviction. As he laced his shoes, a little superstitious thrill tingled along his spine at the thought of *It* plucking Little Billy from the deck and carrying him into the dark depths of the brooding mountain.

But that was nonsense, he immediately reflected, half angry with himself. By George! If he allowed that confounded volcano to affect him so, he would soon be as bad as old Sails! Still, he had better go on deck and take a look at Little Billy, and satisfy the old man. His watch was soon, anyway.

Martin was recalling the hunchback's nervousness a few hours previous; Little Billy was wrestling John Barleycorn. If he had disappeared as the sailmaker claimed, he had probably lost the bout and would be found in drunken sleep. There was whisky in the medicine-chest—no, he had the keys. Well, then the alcohol in the boatswain's locker.

"Was there anything unusual about Little Billy's manner when you s[illegible] one bell?" he asked MacLean.

"No, lad. I ken your thought," repl[illegible] the other. "He'd no had a drop, though he was jumpy as a cat."

Martin was taken aback by Sails' shrewd guess. He tiptoed to the door.

"Come on," he whispered to Sails. "Don't make any noise. We don't want to disturb the others until we make sure Little Billy isn't on the job."

THEY stepped into the cabin, and Martin's first glance was toward the medicine-chest. It had not been disturbed. They went forward, through the cabin alleyway, toward the main deck. The boatswain's room opened off here.

Martin opened the door, half expecting to see the hunchback chatting with his bosom friend. But the room was dark, and the red giant was sleeping noisily. Then they opened the door at the end of the alleyway and stepped out on deck, Martin softly closing the door behind him.

Abruptly, Martin found himself isolated in a sea of murk. At that hour, the sun had dipped for its brief concealment beneath the horizon, and the fog, which had been a gray-brown curtain in daylight, was now an all-enshrouding cloak of blackness that rendered eyesight useless.

Literally, Martin could not see his hand before his face. Nor could he see the door to the cabin alleyway, that he had just closed, though he had stepped but a couple of paces away from it. Nor could he see Sails, though the latter stood but an arm's length distant. Sails's hoarse whisper came through the gloom:

"Ye see the night, lad? *Och*, 'tis a night for evil!"

Martin shivered at the sound of Sails' dismal croaking. See the night! He could see nothing. The other's voice came out of an impenetrable void. Above him, beneath him, all about him, was nothing but blackness, thick, clinging gloom. The Stygian, fog-filled night crushed, like a heavy, intangible weight; one choked for breath.

Martin felt like an atom lost in black immensity. He wanted to shout at the top of his voice. But what he did do was lift his voice gently, so the words would not arouse the sleepers in the cabin.

"Little Billy! Billy!" he called.

His call was swallowed up, smothered, by

He strained his ears. But the answer was the eery cry of a night-ging gull and the deep moaning of the sea upon the rocks—that and the hoarse, uneasy breathing of the invisible MacLean.

Martin was more than disturbed by that silence.

"Sails, who are the fo'c's'le hands who have this watch?" he said.

"Rimoa and Oomak," came MacLean's voice. "They were for'rd when I came aft for you."

Martin called again, along the decks.

"Rimoa! Oomak! For'rd there—speak up!"

The wailing voices of the night replied; not a word, not a footfall came out of the gloom to tell of stirring human life.

"Good Lord, they must all be asleep!" exclaimed Martin testily. "Sails, where is that lantern you spoke of?"

"In the galley—I left it there," answered the sailmaker. "I will go fetch it."

He heard MacLean's retreating footsteps, uncertain and uneven, as the man felt his way forward. The diminishing sounds affected him strangely; he was suddenly like a little child affrighted by the dark. The sinister night contained a nameless threat. The black wall that encompassed him, flouting his straining gaze, seemed peopled by rustlings and leering eyes. Abruptly, Martin decided to follow MacLean, instead of waiting for him.

He stepped out in the other's wake, as he thought. After a blundering moment, he fetched up against the ship's rail. He tacked away and bumped into the after capstan, which stood in the middle of the deck. He barked his shins there and swore aloud to relieve his surcharged feelings.

Then his groping hand encountered a little object, lying on top of the capstan, that checked his words instantly. It was a well-known article, one he had handled often, and recognized immediately he touched it—it was Little Billy's rubber tobacco-pouch. He fingered it apprehensively, staring about him. Why was Little Billy's pouch abandoned there on the capstan-head, this pocket companion of an inveterate smoker? Why, Little Billy must be near by! He called excitedly:

"Billy! Billy! Where are you?"

The night took his hail and returned its own sphinx-like reply. Martin stuffed the pouch into his pocket. He was distinctly uneasy, now, on the hunchback's account. Something had happened, he felt—some accident had happened to Little Billy. It was not like Little Billy to thus forsake his beloved shag, his constant ally in his fight against the drink hunger. Had the poor devil succumbed after all? Had he deserted Nicotine for Barleycorn?

Martin leaned over the capstan, peering into that baffling gloom. He stiffened tensely. He seemed to hear whispering; it came out of that black pit before him, the very ghost of a man's voice.

He strained his ears, but the sound, if sound it were, was not repeated. He was impatient for MacLean to appear with the lantern, but he could no longer hear MacLean's footfalls. Then his ears caught another sound; it was peculiar, like the patter of bare feet.

"MacLean! Where are you?" he called sharply. "Hurry with that lantern!"

Instead of MacLean's voice in reply, he heard a heavy breathing, the sound of a man taking several long, sobbing breaths. The breathing ceased immediately, but a light patter followed it, and then the scrape of a shod foot across the deck. The sounds came from just ahead, close by, but he could see nothing. But he sensed some kind of a struggle was taking place on the deck.

He started forward, and then stopped dead. Out of the black void before him came MacLean's voice—strangled words in a horrible, ascending pitch:

"Marty! Marty! My God! Ah-h-h!"

There was the thud of a heavy, falling body striking the deck.

For a second Martin was anchored by horror. Then he leaped forward, giving voice as he did to a great, arousing, wordless bellow. And even as he ran blindly ahead those few paces, he heard a heavy voice give a shouted supplement to his call.

The darkness was suddenly alive with rushing feet. A body hurled itself against him, an arm struck a sweeping blow, and he felt the knife rip through his flannel shirt and graze his shoulder near his neck.

He went reeling backward, his foot tripped on a ring-bolt in the deck, and he fell heavily. His head struck with stunning force against a bulwark stanchion.

The collision scattered his wits, and Martin lay in the scuppers, blinking at the dancing lights before his eyes. In his ears was a great humming. Then, after a moment, the

humming broke into parts and became a babel of shouts.

He heard a harsh chatter—voices crying out in a foreign tongue. He heard a great booming voice that stirred memory. He heard a pistol-shot. He heard Ruth's voice, raised in a sharp, terror-stricken cry:

"Martin—Billy—Martin! Oh, help!"

The scream galvanized Martin to action. *She* was calling him!

He struggled to arise, got upon his knees, reached upward and grasped a belaying-pin in the rail above. Clutching the pin, he drew himself erect.

He swayed drunkenly for a moment, still dizzied by his fall. The pandemonium of a moment agone was stilled. Ruth did not cry out again, but voices came from aft. The belaying-pin he grasped was loose in its hole and unencumbered by rope. Quite without reasoning, Martin drew it out, and, grasping it clublike, lurched aft.

Twice during his headlong flight toward the cabin, hands reached out of the darkness to stay him. And twice the stout, oaken club he wielded impacted against human skulls, and men dropped in their tracks.

Martin burst out of the gloom into the small half-circle of half light that came from the now open alleyway door. He rushed through, into the cabin.

He had time but for a glimpse of the scene in the cabin. One whirling glance that took in the scattered company—the bedraggled Japanese, Captain Dabney lying face down across the threshold of his room, his white hair bloodied, Wild Bob Carew lifting a startled face. And Carew was holding a squirming, fighting Ruth in his arms!

Martin hardly checked the stride of his entrance. He flung himself toward the man who held his woman, and his club cracked upon another skull.

A man hurtled against him and drove him against the wall. He saw Carew fall, and Ruth spill free of the encircling arms.

Then a hand took him by the throat, long, supple, muscular fingers stopping his wind. He saw a face upraised to his—an expressionless yellow face, with glittering, slanting eyes. He drew up his club for the blow. The slender fingers were probing upward, behind his jawbone, and he was choking.

Then, it seemed to Martin, a stream of liquid fire flooded his veins, searing his entire body. The belaying-pin dropped from his nerveless hand, his arms dropped, his knees sagged.

The terrible fingers squeezed tighter. He could feel his eyeballs starting, his tongue swelling. The flame consumed his vitals. It was hellish pain — quite the sharpest agony Martin had ever felt.

He was upon his back on the floor. The fingers were gone, but the awful pain continued. His wits were swimming. A pair of soft arms were about him. His reeling head was cushioned against a loved and fragrant breast; a dear voice spoke his name anxiously:

"Martin, Martin! What have they done? Oh, Martin, speak to me!" He tried to speak, but could not.

Then the loved presence was gone, and he was alone. A face bent over him—a yellow face. It was a well-remembered face, the face of little Dr. Ichi. But what a towsled, bedraggled successor to the former dandy!

Ichi was smiling at him. It was all very strange to Martin, unreal, like the fancies of a delirium. A mist came before his eyes and blotted out the smiling face. But his senses left him with Ichi's courteously spoken words in his ears:

"Very, very sorry, Mr. Blake. You were of such roughness we were compelled to use the ju-jitsu!"

CHAPTER XV

IN THE LAZARET

IT SEEMED to Martin he was wandering in a vast and thirsty desert. To the very core of his being he was dry. Drink! Drink! With his whole life he lusted drink. He waded through that parched world, burning up with thirst.

Despite his efforts, his mouth sagged open, and his tongue, swollen to prodigious size, burst through its proper limits and hung down upon his breast, broiling in the rays of the hot sun. To make the keener his thirst, there lay before him a delectable oasis, a patch of moist green, with playing fountains and rippling cascades plainly visible to his tortured gaze. He struggled toward it, and always, as he neared it, some malign influence clutched his wrists—which unaccountably stuck out behind him—and jerked him back.

For ages and ages he waded through the

dry sand toward the water, and ever the Evil One who controlled his wrists kept him from attaining his desire. Water! Water! He was in agony for water. Water! Would he never reach that blessed water?

Then something cold, slimy, horrible, ran over his face, and the loathful thrill he felt shocked him into reality.

The desert vanished. He tried to move and sat up. He heard a frenzied squeaking, and a light scampering on wood, and he knew that a rat had run over his body.

All the sensations of consciousness assailed him abruptly. He heard the rats, and a deep rumble near by; he saw dimly in the darkness; he smelled of mingled odors of provisons; he felt thirst. Though he was out of the desert, he was still consumed with thirst.

He sat quietly for a moment while his confused thoughts gradually arrayed themselves in orderly fashion. He knew where he was instantly—the jumble of casks, and kegs, and boxes, that surrounded him, and which he could dimly perceive in the gloom, and the smell, told him he was in the ship's lazaret. How he came to be there was as yet concealed behind a haze that clouded his memory.

Next, he became aware that something was the matter with his arms. They ached cruelly. After a moment's experimenting and reflection the truth came to him with shocking force—his arms were drawn behind him, and his wrists were handcuffed together. The shock of that discovery dissipated the fog over his mind. He began to remember.

But while his wits groped, he was sharply conscious of his thirst. It blazed. His tongue felt like a piece of swollen leather. He felt pain. His throat was throbbing with pain. Water! Water was the pressing need, the most important thing in existence.

He tried to mouth his desire, to speak it aloud, and a weak and painful gurgle struggled outward from his throat.

There was a stir close by him, and a voice spoke up. Martin was then aware that the deep rumble he had been listening to was the sound of a man swearing deeply and softly. The man now spoke to him.

"Ow, lad, is that you? 'Ave you come to, Martin!"

Martin peered toward the voice, and saw a few feet ahead of him, beyond a circular stanchion, the shadowy outline of a man. He tried to speak, to say, "Bosun! Bosun!" But his misused throat and parched tongue refused to form the words. And with the other's voice came memory, complete and terrible. The past was arrayed before his mind's eye with a lightning flash of recollection. The dreadful present was clear to him in all its bitter truth.

He remembered the trip to the deck in search of Little Billy; the black, evil night, and MacLean's horrid outcry. He remembered the scene in the cabin, Captain Dabney lying inert on the floor, the hateful ring of yellow faces, and Carew—Carew clasping Ruth in his arms!

He remembered felling Carew, and being felled himself by the lethal clutch of the Japanese. He remembered Ichi, and even Ichi's words, "compelled to use the ju-jitsu." They had ju-jitsued him! That was what was wrong with his throat.

The sum of his memories was clear, and for the moment it crushed and terrified him. For it was evident that that which they had speculated upon as a remote, almost impossible, contingency, had come to pass—the brig was in Carew's hands. They had been surprised in the fog, a piracy had occurred, murder had been done, and Wild Bob and his yellow followers had taken the ship.

He was a prisoner in the bowels of the ship, his hands chained behind his back, absolutely helpless. And Sails was dead! And Little Billy was dead! Captain Dabney was dead! The crew—God knew, perhaps—they were slaughtered too! And Ruth—Ruth was alive, in Carew's hands, at the mercy of the brute she so feared. Ruth was alive—to suffer what fate? And he—he who loved her—was chained and helpless.

Panic, rage, despair, shook Martin. In excess of misery, he groaned aloud, a smothered sob of anguish.

"Martin, lad! 'Ave you come around? You're sittin' up. Ow, swiggle me, lad, pipe up!"

The words came from the huddled figure behind the stanchion, in a husky, beseeching rumble. The shadowy figure stirred, and Martin heard the sharp clink of steel striking against steel.

The words and the sound pierced his dread, and brought his thoughts back to the boatswain. He tried a second time to answer the other's hail, and managed to articulate

in a hoarse mumble. The words tore barbed through his sore throat, and were hardly managed by his dry, swollen tongue.

"All right—bos—dry—come."

He got upon his knees and peered into the darkness about him. He was in a narrow passageway between two rows of ship's stores that ran fore and aft the length of the lazaret. He was facing forward. Just behind him, on his right hand, a ladder ran up to the cabin overhead, but the trap-door in the cabin floor was closed.

His scrutiny was aided as much by memory as by eyesight, for he had several times been in this chamber, breaking out stores. The passage he sat in, he knew, ran forward to the row of beef casks which abutted against the forward bulkhead. Midway was an intersecting, thwart-ship alleyway between the stores. At this point of intersection was the stanchion, behind which was the boatswain, a hulking black blot in the surrounding gloom.

He hunched himself along upon his knees, and reached the stanchion.

"Drink—dry—water," he gabbled painfully.

"Marty—Marty, lad, I'm glad you're 'ere!" came the heartfelt whisper from the boatswain. "I feared 'e 'ad choked the life out o' ye. Dry, ye say? So am I, lad. Cussed so much I can't spit—an' my back's bloomin' well busted from bending over 'ugging this stanchion!"

Martin, leaning against a tier of boxes, was able to see the boatswain more clearly. He could not make out the other's features plainly, but he almost rubbed against an arm and leg, and he saw that the big man was in his underwear. The boatswain was seated on the floor, and his arms and legs encircled the stanchion.

"I'd 'a 'come to you, Marty, but the blighters 'ave me ironed, ironed 'and an' foot around this bloody stanchion! Ow, but it's a black business, lad! But can ye stand, Martin? 'Ave they ironed you, too?"

Martin desperately endeavored to swallow the dry lump in his throat.

"Behind back—hand," he managed to gulp out. "Throat bad—can't talk—dry——"

"Be'ind your back!" broke in the boatswain. "Ow —— blast the cruel devils! Be'ind your back—ironed be'ind your back! An' you lyin' on your arms these hours! That's cruel 'ard—'arder than me 'ugging this ruddy post. Throat bad? I seen them giving you the squeeze. jitsu—swiggle me if it wasn't! But can ye stand, Martin? 'Ave you the use o' your legs? Because, them boxes you're leanin' against are canned goods, tomatoes an' such, and——"

But Martin heard no more. He had struggled to his feet, and begun to investigate. For the boatswain's remark concerning canned goods had brought two memories to his mind. One memory went back to the old, half-forgotten days of his clerkhood in San Francisco. In those days he had occasionally gone on Sunday hikes over the Marin hills, in company with Fatty Jones, who worked in a neighboring office. And Fatty Jones, he recalled, always carried with him, in preference to a canteen, two cans of tomatoes for drinking purposes.

The second memory went back but a week. He, and the two Kanakas of his watch, had been sent below to break out a fresh cask of beef. As they struggled with the heavy burden in this very passageway, one of the Kanakas had knocked from its position on top of a pile, a box of tomatoes. The fall broke open the box. They had tossed it back into place, unrepaired. Unless some one had subsequently renailed the cover on that box, it was open to him, somewhere along the top tier.

A vision of himself quaffing deeply of the cool, wet contents of those cans, filled Martin's mind to the exclusion of aught else.

The row of boxes was about breast-high. Unable to use his hands, Martin leaned over and explored with his chin. The fourth box rewarded him. He broke his skin upon a bared nail, and, craning further, rubbed his jawbone over the cold, smooth, round tops of cans.

He crooned with delight. Then followed despair as he discovered that he was unable, without the use of his hands, to either move the box or extract a can.

The boatswain, following his progress with eye and ear, counseled him:

"Turn around, an' bend over, an' reach up backwards. No? Well, try and get on top o' the pile, and flop over."

It was bracing advice. Martin pulled himself together and essayed the attempt.

Slowly he wormed his way upward until his middle balanced on the edge of the top tier. A quick writhe placed him atop.

bent back, and his manacled hands around till they encountered the cans.

It required repeated attempts ere he was able to draw one out of the box, for the cans were large, of gallon size, and his numbed arms were almost strengthless. But at last he plucked one out and canted it over the edge of the box. It struck the deck with a thud. He scrambled down from his perch, croaking excitedly——

"Got it—bos—got—one."

An instant later, he had kicked the can to the stanchion, and was squatted again by the boatswain's side.

The boatswain slid his arms down the post and felt of the treasure.

"Aye—ye got it!" he commented. "But 'ow'll we open the thing? Too big for me to get my 'ands around, or I'd twist it open —an' the way we're tied up we can't bash it against anything. Strike me a blushin' pink, what rotten luck! An' we fair perishin' with thirst!"

"Got—knife?" mumbled Martin.

"Knife! I ain't got my bloody clothes, let alone my knife! Caught me in my bunk, asleep, they did. And you needn't twist about looking for your sheath-knife, lad. I seen them take it from you, up there in the cabin. Swiggle me, we're stumped—but, you 'aven't a pocket-knife, 'ave you?"

"No," answered Martin.

His spirits were at zero, with the diminishing prospect of tasting those wet tomatoes. His raging thirst, whetted by expectation, assailed him with added force; he was actually dizzy with lust of drink.

"Blimme! 'Aven't you anything in your pockets what's sharp?" asked the boatswain. "Ow, what tough luck!"

Martin suddenly remembered something.

"Got—keys," he croaked. "Bunch—keys."

"Keys!" echoed the other. "Bless me, that's better. May work it. Can you reach them—what pocket? Side? 'Ere—lean closer to me, an' I'll get 'em out. Keys! Ow—any of them sharp pointed? Any Yales?"

Two of the boatswain's clublike fingers worked their way into Martin's trousers pocket.

"Don't know — not — mine," Martin answered the questioning. "Keys belong —Little Billy—gave——"

The boatswain's fingers stopped prodding for a second. The man tensed, drew in a sharp breath, and then exploded an oath.

"What! Billy's keys? God 'elp us lad, did ye say you 'ad Little Billy's keys?"

The fingers dove into the pocket with redoubled energy, grasped the keys, and drew them out. And then the boatswain pawed them over for a moment.

"Ow, strike me, 'e spoke right!" he muttered exultingly. "Billy's keys—the steward's ring! Oh ho! An' may the devil swiggle me bleedin' well stiff, if 'ere ain't the wery key! By 'Eaven, I'll 'ave my bare 'ands on that bloke yet! Ow—what luck!"

"What—" commenced the astonished Martin.

"What!" echoed the boatswain. "'Ere—you just stand around, and let me get at them bracelets! I'll show ye what! Ow—where's the bloody 'ole! Ah-h!"

There was a tiny click—and Martin felt his steel bonds being drawn from his wrists. His nerveless arms fell to his sides.

The boatswain explained the miracle.

"Little Billy's keys—'ow'd you 'appen—don't ye see, lad? There's a duplicate key to these irons on Billy's key-ring. Old Man 'as the other key—or 'ad, suppose Carew 'as it now. It fits all the irons. 'Ere, turn me loose now. This little key!"

A moment later, Martin's fumbling fingers completed their task, and the big man's limbs were free. The boatswain straightened and stretched with a grunt of satisfaction. Martin, obeying the dominant need, which was to drink, seized the can of tomatoes and commenced to pound it against the stanchion, in the hope of bursting it open.

"'Ere—stop that!" hoarsely commanded the boatswain. "You'll 'ave them down on us with that noise. Give me the can—an' the keys. Ah—'ere's a Yale, saw edge. Just drive it through—so. An' use it like a bloomin' can-opener—so. 'Ere you are, lad, drink 'earty. I know 'ow a chokin' like you got makes a man crazy with thirst. I'm some dry myself."

Martin seized the can. The boatswain had cut a small, jagged opening in the top, and Martin clapped his mouth over it, cutting his lips in his eagerness. He drank, drank. It was an exquisite delight to feel the cool stream pouring down his throat; his whole body was instantly refreshed, invigorated.

He paused for breath, and drank again. The contents of the can were three-quarters

drinkable, and he gulped the major portion down. Then he stopped with a sudden shame of his greediness, recalling the boatswain's expressed need.

"Oh, bosun, I forgot!" he exclaimed, noting as he spoke that his tongue was limber and tractable again, and that he could form words.

"That's all right, laddie," said the boatswain, taking the proffered can. "I know 'ow you felt. Enough for me 'ere. Ah, that's better than the best drink ever mixed be'ind a bar. Plenty, lad, plenty—I feel fit now. 'Ere, 'ave some more."

Martin finished the tin. Then he heaved a surfeited sigh.

"Oh, I didn't think I'd ever get enough," he said. "Why, I was so dry I couldn't talk. And my throat——"

"I know," interrupted the boatswain, sitting down beside him. "You're bleedin' lucky to be talkin' now, even in a whisper. I've seen other men choked like you was, an' they couldn't say a word for days. Slick beggars with their fingers, them jitsu blokes! And now, Martin, let's figure it out. Ow, swiggle me, what'll we do? The lass——"

The boatswain swore deeply and energetically.

Martin groaned in unison with the other's oaths, his love-born panic for the girl's safety overwhelming him again. Grim, horrible fears surged through his mind and pricked him unendurably. God! Ruth, his Ruth, was alone, helpless, at the mercy of those devils' lusts! And he was sitting here inactive! It was unendurable!

He scrambled to his feet, with the wild idea of mounting the ladder to the cabin and battering his way through the trap-door. He must succor Ruth!

The boatswain reached up a huge hand and pulled him down again. Martin struggled for a moment, his reason clouded by his hot fear.

"But, bosun—Ruth!" he cried. "Ruth is — Good God, man, Carew and those yellow men have Ruth!"

The giant restrained him as easily as if he were a child, and talked soothingly.

"Aye, aye, lad—I know. But Ruth is safe, I think, so far. An' ye can bet your bottom dollar Carew will keep the Japs at their distance of the lass, and she'll stand off Carew—for a w'ile, any'ow. Swiggle me, Martin, 'ave sense. What can ye do bare-'anded? 'Ere, n[illegible] still, and we'll figure out some plan. [illegible] all right. She's in the Old Man's room, a-nursin' 'im."

"No, no—the captain is dead!" asserted Martin. "I saw him lying dead on the floor!"

"'E wasn't dead," said the boatswain. "Carew took 'is gun away, and 'it 'im over the eye with the butt of it. Laid 'im out, same as you. They let the lass take 'im into 'is room and stay there to nurse 'im. I seen it, I tell ye!"

Martin subsided.

"But what will we do?" he exclaimed. "We must do something, bosun!"

"Aye—please God, we'll do something," said the boatswain. "Please God, I'll 'ave my 'ands on that black'earted murderer—and on Ichi, too! I 'ave a plan. But first, tell me what 'appened to you? 'Ow did you 'appen to be on deck? It wasn't your watch. What 'appened on deck before you came bouncing into the cabin and batted Carew on the knob with the belayin'-pin? Neat crack! Too bad it didn't 'urt the beggar much. And brace up, lad! I know 'ow ye feel. I know 'ow 'tis between you and the lass—I've seen the eyes ye give each other. She'll be safe, Martin. Strike me, God will never let them 'arm 'er, swiggle me stiff if 'E will!"

THERE was a wealth of simple faith in the giant's voice, and some of it found lodgment in Martin's troubled breast. He composed himself, held himself in sure check, and upon the boatswain's repeated request, told what had happened to him from the moment the old sailmaker had awakened him till he felt his senses leave him in the cabin.

When he finished, he discovered it was his turn to hearten. The boatswain was immersed in grief, and the hunchback was the cause.

"Ow, swiggle me! I 'oped as 'ow Billy was safe somewhere—locked up like us," he groaned. "But 'e's gone. Got 'im first, likely. Must 'ave slipped up be'ind 'im, while 'e was fillin' 'is pipe there w'ere ye found 'is baccy, and give 'im the knife. They didn't 'ave guns—used knives. They got guns now, blast 'em. An' Little Billy's gone! I—I loved the lad, Martin." The man's voice choked.

"But he may not be dead, not even injured," urged Martin. "I only heard Sails cry out. Perhaps Billy wasn't around when

they slipped aboard. You know his failing, bosun, and you know how he has been the last few days. The reason I have the keys, you know, is because he didn't want to be tempted by the medicine-chest. Maybe he gave in, and got some alcohol, forward, and got drunk and went to sleep."

The boatswain snorted indignantly.

"You don't know Billy like I do!" he cried. "Drunk, no! Billy 'ad 'is failing, but 'e'd sooner 'a' died than give in at such a time. No—'e's gone. Ye say old Sails told ye Billy was feyed! Ow, that proves it. That —— burgoo-eater was always right in such things! Billy, dear Billy—'e was a proper mate, Martin."

The boatswain's mood changed abruptly, and rage possessed him. Martin felt the man's great body tremble with the intensity of his passion. He spoke through his clenched teeth, slowly and strangely, without using his accustomed expletives.

"They killed 'im! They'll pay. We're goin' to get out o' 'ere, Martin—I know 'ow, now. We're going to try an' take the ship back. Aye—maybe they'll get us, but I'll twist the necks o' some o' them first. And I'll get Carew, 'imself!"

He spoke the words with a cool positiveness that bred belief. Martin, in almost as vengeful a mood as the other, was grimly cheered by the pictured prospect.

"I'll tell you what I know about it," went on the boatswain in a somewhat lighter voice. "They got me in my bunk. 'Ad the irons on me before I was awake—ye know 'ow I sleep, like a ruddy corpse. Ichi steered 'em. The blighter knows the ship, knew where the irons 'ung in the cabin, knew 'ow the rooms are laid out. When I woke up I was 'elpless, and 'alf dozen o' them picked me up and packed me into the cabin and threw me down be'ind the table. That's where I lay when you busted in. They 'ad gagged me with my own socks.

"They must 'ave been on board before Sails came aft, and as soon as the two of ye went for'rd, they slipped into the alleyway be'ind ye. I was already dumped on the cabin floor when the rumpus broke out on deck—at the same instant Carew appeared. At the noise, the Old Man jumped out of 'is room, gun in 'and, and 'e shot at Carew's voice. Carew grabbed the gun, and banged 'im over the eye with it, and the Old Man went down across 'is doorway. Then Ruth popped out o' 'er room, and Carew grabbed 'er. She fought like the devil. Then you bust in with your belayin'-pin.

"After they 'ad choked you, an' after Carew 'ad got to 'is feet and pulled the lass away from 'uggin' and kissin' you, Carew and Ichi began to confab. It was English, and I 'eard a bit. Ichi went to the Old Man, 'oo was breathin' heavy, and examined 'im like 'e was a sure enough sawbones. 'E says the Old Man is just knocked out, and no fracture. 'E takes the Old Man's keys. Then Carew 'as a couple o' 'ands hoist the Old Man into 'is bunk, and 'e says to the lass as 'ow she can 'tend to the skipper. Ruth bounces into the room and slams an' locks the door. Carew laughs and turns to business.

"An' what do ye think 'is first order was? To 'ave the cook aft. In a jiffy, they 'ad Charley Bo Yip afore 'im. 'E ordered grub—slathers o' grub, immediate, for fifteen. Yip took the order without turnin' a 'air—trust a Chink for that. Then they give us attention, an' they lift the trap an' dump us down 'ere. They leave you where you fell, but they boosted me along to this 'ere stanchion and, while Carew tickled my shoulder-baldes with a knife, Ichi, using the skipper's key, trussed me up around the post. Then they went aloft again, slippin' the cuffs on you as they passed, I think, for they didn't do it in the cabin.

"Well, in fifteen minutes they were back—'alf dozen o' them, with Yip, and plenty o' lanterns. Breaking out stores for Yip. Yip never looks at me till he's ready to go aloft again. Then, making sure I can see 'is mug, 'e tips me a big wink. That means something, Martin. They're deep uns them Chinks.

"That's all. I sat there, cuffed up proper, for hours, cussing, and thinking, and calling to you. Hours! Swiggle me stiff, 'twas a bloody lifetime, it seemed like. About five or six hours though, I think—must be about seven or eight o'oclock now.

"That's all that 'appened. But I'll tell you what I learned from Carew's and Ichi's talk, and from lookin' at them. They've been cast away, lad! That's why we didn't sight the schooner when we looked for 'er. The *Dawn* was wrecked, some time ago. Carew ordered food for fifteen—the *Dawn* was fitted for seal 'unting, and carried a crew o' nigh thirty. That shows only 'alf were saved—a bad wreck.

"They ordered grub first thing—shows they didn't save stores, and 'ave been starvin' ashore. Must 'ave saved a boat though, or they couldn't 'ave boarded us. Must 'ave seen us come in; spied us from one o' the caves in the wolcano, an' we could not see them. The blasted fog just played into their 'ands. 'Aving been ashore, they must 'ave found the ambergrease. They needed a ship, and they took us. And there ye are! Sails dead, Little Billy dead, God knows 'ow many o' the crew gone, the lass at the whim o' Wild Bob Carew. Ow, what a bit o' blasted luck! Swiggle me stiff!"

The boatswain growled desperate oaths to himself. For a few moments he gave himself up to lurid and audible thought.

Martin, in as black a mood himself, kept his peace, but he, too, spent the time in thought, in gloomy surmising, in attempting to form some plan of action. "What to do—what to do!" The refrain sang in his troubled mind. They must act, and act quickly. Ruth's safety, and the lives of their comrades, if any were alive, depended on the boatswain and himself. But—what to do?

Though they were free of their bonds, they were still boxed in this storeroom like rats in a trap! Obviously the first thing to do was to get out of the lazaret.

Martin commenced to formulate a hazy plan of lurking beneath the trap-door until opened from above, and then trying to burst into the cabin, trusting to luck aiding them there. A mad plan, foredoomed to failure, he conceded to himself, even as he thought of it. But, what else? They must act! Ruth . . .

In the somber field of Martin's misery bloomed a tiny flower; and whenever his mental eye rested upon this exotic, a sudden glow of happiness pervaded his being. This bright flower was a memory—the thought of himself lying helpless on the cabin floor, while two soft arms pressed his sore-addled head to a protecting bosom, and warm lips caressed his face, and a dear voice entreated; the thought of the boatswain's confirming words, "Carew pulled the lass away from 'uggin' and kissin' you."

So, she loved him! She returned his love! The love he had seen lighting her eyes, but which he could never force her to acknowledge by words, she had unmistakably admitted by action. In that black moment in the cabin, she had bared her heart to him—bared it fear... all that hostile, leering company. ... was returned. Ruth loved him!

Such was the origin of the exultant thrills that shot brightly through Martin's despair. But the triumphant thought was momentary. Love could not brighten their lot; nay, love but made more numerous the grim host of cruel fears that pressed upon him. Ruth—God! What would happen to Ruth, what had happened to her, what was happening to her even now, while he sat mooning, cooped and helpless in this black hole? It was unendurable! He exploded a fierce oath.

"Bosun, we must do something—now—at once!" he cried.

The giant placed a restraining hand upon his shoulder.

"Easy lad! Not so loud, or ye'll 'ave them coming down for a look-see. We don't want that," he admonished. "Steady! I know 'ow you feel—but raising a rumpus down 'ere won't 'elp us none. We'll do something right enough. I got a plan, didn't I tell ye! I was just thinking it out—'ere, I'll tell you. First, though, let's fix these bleedin' irons, in case they pay us a visit."

He leaned over, searching about on the dark deck, and Martin heard the clinking as he gathered up the cuffs. He fiddled with them for a moment.

"'Ere, Martin, stick out your 'ands!"

Martin complied, and felt the handcuffs close about his wrists.

"See if you can pull your 'ands out."

Martin found he could, easily.

"All right—just keep them 'anging from one wrist," said the boatswain. "In case they come down on us, we don't want them to find us loose. Just clap your 'ands be'ind you and slip your irons on. I 'ave mine fixed, too, and I'll be 'uggin' the post in the same old way. They won't think o' examinin' us."

"But we can't lounge here indefinitely," commenced Martin impatiently.

"We'll bide quiet for a bit," said the boatswain. "I 'ave a 'unch they'll be coming down soon to give us some scoffin's. They wouldn't 'ave gone to the trouble o' chuckin' us down 'ere if they was going to kill us off'and. And they won't starve us to death—they'll feed us till they get ready to slit our throats an' dump us overside. And if ye strain your ears, lad, you'll 'ear

...onal rattle o' dishes over'ead. ...re eatin' up there. Now, what's the ...ural time to send scoffin's below to the prisoners? Why, thinks I, after they 'ave their own bellies full, and Charley Bo Yip is clearin' away the leavin's. If they don't come in an 'alf-hour or so, I'll commence work."

Martin immediately proposed rushing the hatch as soon as it was opened. The boatswain vetoed the proposal.

"They'd slaughter us, lad. We'd never 'ave a chance. No—'ere's my scheme: We can get out o' this lazaret into the 'old. Aye, that's something ye didn't know, isn't it? Nor does Ichi know, for all 'e was cook aboard. One time, some years ago, we was tradin' in the New 'Ebrides, and the Old Man stowed some o' 'is trade stuff in the after 'old. 'E 'ad a door cut in the for'rd bulk'ead, 'ere, so 'e could get at the goods without opening the 'atch on deck. Afterward, we boarded it up—but the boards aren't nailed; just 'eld by cleats. Right at the for'rd end o' this alley we're squattin' in, be'ind the beef casks. We can get through into the 'old."

"What good will it do?" queried Martin. "We would be just as much prisoners in the hold as where we are. The hatches are battened down."

"Don't ye see? We can make our way for'rd, there being naught but a bit o' ballast in the 'ooker. And from the fore'old I think we can reach deck by way o' the peak. The two of us ought to be able to bust our way into the peak. And ye know where the forepeak 'atch is—in the middle o' the fo'c's'le deck! Well, I figure they 'ave what's left o' our foremast crowd locked in the fo'c's'le. Aye, I figure there is some o' them left. If Carew 'ad meant to make a clean sweep at once, we'd not be down 'ere. So—if we can get into the fo'c's'le and join our lads, the odds won't be so great against us. Be great enough, though, even if most o' our 'ands are safe; swiggle me, fifteen o' them, and the blighters 'ave the use o' our own guns, out of the cabin.

"But our lads are good boys. They'll fight if we get to them to lead them; every man Jack would go to —— for the lass! And if we can bust out on deck, there's capstan bars and belaying-pins to fight with. It's a long chance, Martin, but a better one than your plan would give us, tryin' to break into the cabin from 'ere, just us two, and gettin' knocked on the 'ead, or shot, soon as we started through the 'atch!"

Better than his plan! Why, it was a definite campaign. A flame of hope kindled in Martin's breast. He was for immediate action.

"Come on—let's start!" he exclaimed, and he started to scramble to his feet.

"'Ere—'old on!" exclaimed the boatswain, pulling him back on his haunches. "Swiggle me, don't fly up like that, lad! Keep your 'ead cool. We got to wait a bit. We don't want them comin' down 'ere to find we've did the wanishin' stunt. We got to pull this off as a surprise. We ought to wait till night when 'alf o' them, at least, would be asleep; but, blim-me, I can't wait till then, nor can you. But we'll wait a little while an' see if they bring us grub; if they do, we can be pretty sure they won't visit us again for several hours. That'll give us time. Hist, Marty, 'ere comes some one now! Quick, slip on your 'andcuff and play 'alf dead!"

SOME thin points of light, suddenly shooting into their dark prison, from around the edges of the trap-door over their heads, gave rise to the boatswain's exclamations. Martin, observing the light at the same instant as the bosun, knew that the rug that covered the square in the cabin floor had been drawn aside. Some one was about to come down to them.

Martin bent his arms behind him and quickly slipped his free hand into the handcuff. Then he lay down on his side.

The boatswain encircled the stanchion with his arms and legs and adjusted the loose manacles to his wrists and ankles. Except to a close examination, the pair appeared to be as tightly shackled as when their captors introduced them into their present surroundings. They crouched tense and still, their eyes on the square door overhead, waiting.

The trap-door opened. A flood of daylight rushed into the storeroom and lighted a wide patch of boxes and kegs; not, however, reaching to the spot where Martin and the boatswain lay.

"Fog gone," Martin heard his companion mutter.

A man stepped into the light, bearing a lighted lantern in his hand, and started to descend the ladder. But it was not Charley Bo Yip with food, as the boatswain had expected. It was the Japanese, Ichi.

Ichi stepped out of the square of daylight at the bottom of the ladder, lifted his lantern, and sent its beam down the gloomy passage. The two observant prisoners were disclosed.

"Ah, Mr. Blake! I perceive you have regained consciousness, and the power of locomotion," came to Martin's ears in the softly modulated, even voice he so well remembered as being part of the one-time visitor to Josiah Smatt. "May I inquire if you have also recovered speech?" added Ichi.

"Answer 'im," whispered the boatswain, as Martin lay silent and glowering.

"Yes," said Martin.

"Ah, my dear boatswain, Henry, is a wise counselor," remarked Ichi, proving the acuteness of his hearing. "You are to be congratulated, Mr. Blake. One does not usually recover with such admirable quickness from the effects of the cervical plexus hold my man, Moto, practised upon you. And you, my good boatswain—it is with great pleasure that I perceive the workings of Fate have chastened the—er, boisterousness I remember so well from the days of my servitude."

The words were mocking. The Jap was clearly revealed where he stood, with the patch of daylight behind him, and the outheld lantern before him. Martin could not read a thought in that bland, smiling face. But the words mocked.

"Ye monkey-faced, yellow toad!" burst forth the boatswain. "If I 'ad the use o' my 'ands, ye'd not stand there grinnin'!"

"Ah, it grieves to discover I am in error," was Ichi's smiling response to the outburst. "The lessons Fate teaches are learned slowly by rebellious natures. My good boatswain, I would recommend your heated mind to solitude and meditation. If you think with much hardness upon the uncertainties of life, you may achieve that humility of spirit and manner which is so blessed in the eyes of our ancestors."

Ichi stepped forward a pace and lifted higher his lantern, the better to enjoy the effect of his words upon the shackled giant.

"My dear boatswain, do you recall the occasion when my honored self so unfortunately spilled upon your decks of whiteness the grease from the cooking; and how with great furiousness you applied to my respected person the knotted end of a rope? Ah, so then, it would perhaps add interest to your meditation to ponder the possibleness of physical persuasion to correct your faults—in the guise of the fingers of my good Moto! You have beheld the handling of the worthy Mr. Blake—yes?"

A vindictive note had crept into their visitor's soft, impersonal voice as he gibed the boatswain. Martin, staring upward at the lantern-lighted face, half expected to see the smirk flee the lips that threatened torture, and the hateful passions that inspired Ichi's gloating to reveal themselves in his features. But no hint of emotion disturbed the surface of that bland, yellow mask the one-time sea cook wore for a face; only the eyes were leagued with the sinister voice. Martin fancied he saw a cruel and mirthful gleam in Ichi's beady eyes, such a gleam as might creep into the eyes of a cat while playing with a captured mouse.

But the boatswain seemed not a whit appalled by Ichi's words. His response was prompt, and liberally tinged with sulfur and brimstone.

"Aye, I remember rope's-ending you, ye rat-eyed son o' a Hakodate gutter-snipe! If I 'ad my 'ands free now, I'd do worse—I'd pull your rotten 'ead from your shoulders! Aye, swiggle me, 'tis like your breed to mock a man what's tied, ye blasted coolie!"

At the words, expression suddenly enlivened the Jap's face and to Martin's astonishment it was not an expression of hate but of wounded conceit.

"No, no, I am not a coolie!" he exclaimed vehemently. "I am not of common blood—I am a gentleman, a Japanese gentleman!"

The boatswain snorted contemptuously, and Ichi turned to Martin. "You are with knowledge of my gentlemanness, my dear Mr. Blake! You have seen me with proper attire, having conference with the honorable Smatt. I am a Japanese gentleman, sir. I have from my revered ancestors the blood of a Shogun. I am graduated from the University of Tokyo. I have a degree from your own most honorable institution of Columbia."

"Ow —— your ruddy eddication!" broke in the boatswain. "Ye bloody murderer! Ye'll 'ang if you've gone to a dozen colleges! Wait till they 'ear about this business at 'ome, or in any port ye call at! They'll know the brig—and ye'll 'ang, every last scut o' ye!"

The Japanese gentleman recovered his composure as suddenly as he had lost it, as

the boatswain swore. He was again his suave self. Martin cast a quick glance toward the boatswain, and a certain sly expression that flitted across the giant's fierce features enlightened him. He glimpsed the method in the boatswain's madness.

"Ah, my boatswain, you have a defect in your reflectiveness," Ichi purred smoothly, in response to the boatswain's prophecy. "We do not fear hanging; rather will events shape thusly: If the authorities of your America learn by some unlikely favor of Fate of our barratry, they will say, 'The brigantine *Cohasset*, commanded by the notorious filibuster, Captain Dabney, which slipped out of San Francisco without clearance—yes, we know that, my worthy friend—is again in trouble. The trouble has happened in Russian waters—let the Russians attend to it. We are satisfied if the respected Dabney never again is able to arouse our worriness.' Is it not so the American officials would speak, Mr. Henry?"

The boatswain swore luridly.

"And the Russians, if the affair came to their attention, would move not at all against us," went on Ichi, smug pleasure in his voice. "Indeed, the chartered company might even reward us for removing one of such dangerousness as Captain Dabney from their trade reserves. And if you suppose my Government would act, I fear you underestimate with greatness the powerfulness of my connections in my country. No, my dear boatswain, it is most unlikely this incident will ever reach unfriendly ears, or ever cross the Pacific. You might meditate upon your chance to carry the tale."

"Ye may slit all our throats," said the boatswain, "but as long as the old brig's above water, there's the evidence that'll 'ang ye."

"Ah—not so," answered Ichi. "There are many closed harbors in my native Yezzo, and the honorable Captain Carew assures me that rigs may be altered. The honorable captain will have a new schooner, to replace the *Dawn*, for next year's season—and at slight expense to my company. A skilful man in his profession—the honorable Carew!"

"Skilful ——!" taunted the boatswain. "'E wasn't skilful enough to save 'is ship!"

"Fate. A night of darkness, and much wind," said Ichi. "Yet Fate relented—for, after a week of starving in the holes on the quaking island, Fate sends you to our rescue. Fate smiles upon our side, my boatswain—brings us to the Fire Mountain, plays you into the trap, gives to the honorable Carew his wish, and now, only——"

A heavy voice boomed down through the open hatch and interrupted Ichi's smirking revelations. Martin directed his gaze beyond the Jap. A man was leaning over the opening, peering into the lazaret. The heavy voice belonged to Carew, Martin knew.

"I say—what is keeping you down there, Ichi?" called Carew. "Do you need help?"

"All right, captain, directly we come!" answered Ichi.

"Can't you get the young blighter to his feet?" went on Carew. "I will send a couple of hands down, to heave him out."

"I am of the opinion he can walk," replied Ichi. He turned to Martin. "My dear Mr. Blake, we muchly desire your presence in the cabin. Can you travel there without assistance?"

Martin received a sharp, meaning glance from the boatswain.

"Yes—I can make it," he told Ichi.

He promptly scrambled to his feet and stumbled toward the ladder.

The boatswain wailed behind him.

"Ow—swiggle me stiff! 'Ere now, Ichi, you ain't goin' to leave me down 'ere alone, all ironed up, and with these bleedin' rats runnin' about!" There was positive fear in the cry.

Ichi chuckled.

"Yes, Mr. Henry, I am convinced that solitude will benefit your manners. Ah—I had not thought of the rats. But surely the great bull boatswain of the *Cohasset* can not fear the little rats! Ah, I am glad you mentioned them; yes, they shall be companions of your meditations."

The boatswain, in a forcible sentence, disclosed his opinion of the Japanese gentleman's ancestral line. Then, abruptly, his tone became conciliatory.

"Ow—but say! Ye'll send me some grub? Swiggle me, ye ain't going to bloody well starve me, are ye?"

Ichi, retreating to the ladder before Martin's advance, delivered his parting shot at the boatswain.

"Fasting, my dear friend, is an ancient companion of meditation. Tomorrow, perhaps, when thought has chastened your mood, there is a possibleness you may receive food."

Martin mounted the ladder with mingled feelings; with dismay at leaving the boatswain, with a wild hope of encountering Ruth above, with exhilaration at the success of the boatswain's strategy.

For Martin had fathomed the boatswain's reason for baiting the Japanese. The boatswain had known of the alloy of vanity in Ichi's composition, and he had seized upon it to extract needful information. He had succeeded; Inchi's conceit and vindictiveness had overcome his native caution.

The boatswain knew now something of the enemy's plans. More important, he knew that he was to be left alone, without disturbance, in the lazaret for a whole day. Ichi had already stepped into the cabin with his lantern. Martin called into the gloom behind him:

"Good-by, bos! Good luck!"

He could not see his friend, but he shrewdly suspected the boatswain was already divesting himself of his bonds. The big fellow's hoarse growl reached him:

"Good-by, lad. Good luck!"

CHAPTER XVI

THREE GENTLEMEN CONVERSE

DAYLIGHT, dazzling to Martin's gloom-accustomed eyes, filled the *Cohasset's* cabin. Martin's upward ranging gaze, as he clambered out of the lazaret, saw, through the open cabin skylights, the blue sky and the sunshine sparkling upon brass fixtures. So he knew the fog had lifted and the day was clear.

He took a step aside from the lazaret hatch, and then sent his eager gaze about the cabin. But Ruth was not present. He was intensely disappointed.

He stared hard at the closed door to Captain Dabney's room, as if the very intensity of his troubled gaze might penetrate those blank oak panels. The boatswain had said Ruth was nursing the captain in that room, But was the boatswain's opinion correct? Hours had passed. Was she still safe in the captain's room?

The slamming shut of the trap-door over the black hole by his side abruptly brought his thoughts back to himself, and his eyes to his surroundings. A man was leaning over, spreading out the rug that ordinarily covered the lazaret opening. Martin recognized the fellow as the same wooden-faced Jap who had choked him unconscious a few hours before. Ichi, he discovered standing by his side, regarding him with an ingratiating smile. But it was neither the ju-jitsu man nor Ichi who fastened Martin's attention.

A large man sprawled in Captain Dabney's easy chair at the farther end of the cabin table. The table was littered with the débris of a meal, which Charley Bo Yip was phlegmatically and deftly clearing away, and Martin stared across the board's disarray at Wild Bob Carew's disdainful face. The erstwhile commander of the schooner *Dawn*, his comrades' unscrupulous enemy, his own rival, was the same aloof, superior rogue he remembered from the night in Spulvedo's dive.

As Martin looked, Carew engaged himself with filling and lighting his pipe, and seemed to be totally unconscious of the disheveled young man standing before him, with wrists manacled behind his back.

Martin was again surprised, as he had been that night in San Francisco, with the incongruity of Wild Bob's appearance contrasted with his activities. Was this splendid figure of a man the vicious outlaw of wide and evil repute? The renegade thief? The persecutor of women? The pitiless butcher of defenseless men? Were those fine, clean-cut features but a mask that covered an abyss of black evil? Did that broad forehead actually conceal the crafty, degenerate brain that planned and executed the bloody and treacherous piracy upon their ship?

The haggardness of recent hardship was upon Carew's features, and a week's, or more, stubble of yellow beard covered his cheeks, yet the growth in nowise brutalized the handsome face. There was a long scar on Carew's forehead, which glowed a vivid red as he sucked upon his pipe; there was also a wide cross of court-plaster on a clipped spot on top of the head. Martin suddenly realized that both disfigurements were his handiwork; one was a memento of the fight on the Frisco waterfront, the other the result of his blow the night before.

Carew suddenly lifted his eyes and met Martin's stare, and a cold thrill tingled along Martin's spine. For there was a hot ferocity lighting the man's eyes; there was a hot, yet calculated, hatred in the level look.

Ichi's suave voice broke the uneasy silence.

"Mr. Blake, we have brought you up here for a little chat," said Ichi. "And before we commence, I beg please to inform you I am your very dear friend, and I think of you no ill. So—will you not be seated?"

Martin seated himself gingerly upon the edge of a chair. It was an uncomfortable position, and his arms ached keenly from being constrained in the unnatural position the handcuffs demanded, but he dare not slip out a hand and relieve himself.

"Ah, let us trust none of the violence of epithet which marked my discourse with the worthy boatswain Henry will mar our conversation, Mr. Blake," went on Ichi. Martin perceived his conceit still smarted under the boatswain's curses. "You are an American gentleman, the honorable Carew is an English gentleman, I am a Japanese gentleman. So, our discussion need not be intruded upon by those exclamations of great explosiveness with which your wonderful English language is so enriched. We gentlemen have civility."

"Never mind talking manners, doctor!" broke in Carew impatiently. "It would please me if you would permit me to forget your gentility for an hour. Come to the point! State our proposition to this fellow, and let him make his choice."

"The point. Ah, yes," said Ichi. "You know, my captain, you people of the West are brutal with your directness. But I shall to the point. Ah, Mr. Blake, I am not mistaken in assuming you would with relishness accept refreshment? You would talk with more easiness?"

"Water—coffee," said Martin briefly.

He was agreeably surprised by the question. He was again very, very dry, and his sore throat pained him and made speaking difficult. He was hungry, too, his supper the night before having been his last meal. He had been looking longingly at the food and drink the Chinaman was rapidly and silently removing from the table, which perhaps inspired Ichi's question.

"I will offer you drink," said Ichi.

Carew snorted disgustedly but did not offer an objection.

"You will pardon us for not offering food," went on Ichi, "but you would be unable to eat in your present condition of bondagement, and we regret muchly our disinclination to free your hands at this juncture. With arms free, you have impressed us most unfortunately."

He glanced toward Carew's plastered head. Carew disclosed some white, even teeth, with a half snarl, and Martin saw beneath the concealing mustache, as he had seen that night in San Francisco, the cruel mouth that gave the lie to Wild Bob's face.

"But your national beverage of coffee contains much food value," added the Japanese, and he barked an order to the Chinaman.

Yip seized a large cup, filled it with black coffee from the big percolator standing in the center of the table, and carried it to Martin. He held it to Martin's lips.

Martin drank eagerly, tilting back his head and staring upward into Yip's face. He half expected to see some sign of friendship there, a fleeting smile, or the flutter of an eyelid. He recalled that Yip had winked at the boatswain, down in the lazaret, and the boatswain had attached importance to the action. But he was disappointed. There was not the hint of an emotion in Charley Bo Yip's moon-like face; not the ghost of an encouraging recognition. Not even Ichi's passionless countenance could match Yip's serene, blank face for lack of expression. The Chinaman might have been pouring the coffee down a hopper, rather than down a man's throat, from his impersonal demeanor.

But if Yip disappointed, the coffee did not. The strong, hot stuff flooded strength through Martin's veins, eased his smarting throat, lubricated his parched tongue. When Yip turned away with the empty cup, Martin heaved a satisfied sigh.

"That is better," he said to Ichi. "Fire away. I can talk now."

Ichi started off on a rambling and flowery appreciation of Martin's implied thanks. Martin gave attention with his ears, but his eyes roved. He had been puzzled since his entry into the room by a certain oddity, familiar oddity, about the other men's appearance.

Carew was wearing a guernsey much too large for him, and Carew was a very big man. Martin suddenly recognized the guernsey as the property of the boatswain. Ichi was clad in shirt and trousers belonging to Little Billy—not a bad fit. The jujitsu man sported a complete outfit of his, Martin's. Obviously, the belongings of the *Cohasset's* crew had been looted to cover the scarecrow nakedness of the captors.

Something else Martin noticed, while

Dr. Ichi talked on with Oriental indirectness. There was a large cupboard affixed to the cabin's forward bulkhead. It stood open and empty. Martin knew what its contents had been. It had been the ship's armory; it had contained four high-powered rifles, two shotguns, and four heavy navy revolvers, with a plentiful supply of amunition for all arms. They were gone. He reflected they must be in the hands of Carew's men. Not a pleasant reflection in view of the boatswain's scheme.

Carew, breaking roughly into Ichi's speech, commanded his attention.

"Never mind all that, Ichi! By Jove! We can not afford to waste time listening to pretty courtesies!" He swung upon Martin with menacing eye and voice. "Here you! No —— hedging now! What has become of the code writing that directed to the ambergris hidden ashore? Come—spit it out. Where is it?"

Martin blinked with surprise at the sudden attack, and at the question itself. He and the boatswain had taken it for granted that Carew, having been ashore on Fire Mountain, had obtained possession of the treasure. The question implied that Carew and his followers had failed to locate the cache; that he had been hauled out of the lazaret for the purpose of giving them information.

"Come—speak up!" commanded Carew, again.

Martin attempted to dissemble.

"I don't know anything about it," he lied. "I have been a common sailor on the ship, and have not been in the confidence——"

"Enough! Spin that yarn to the marines. I want the truth!" cried Carew. "Common sailor—not in their confidence—hey? And since when has Old Man Dabney permitted his foremast hands to live aft? How long since Ruth Le Moyne takes a heart interest in common sailors? Hey?"

He leaned forward in his chair, and shot the questions at Martin. His face was suddenly debased with evil passion, and bitter hatred was clearly revealed in his blazing eyes.

"Listen to me, my fine fellow!" he went on. "You fooled me once and spoiled my plans with your double dealing. But this time you'll throw no dust in my eyes! You'll not get by with any cock-and-bull yarn this time. I know just how warmly you feathered your nest—humoring that old blind fool and making love to his granddaughter. A pretty reward opened to you by your treachery that night in Frisco—a fortune and a sweetheart to boot! Hey, my winsome fancy man! A fine chance you've had for your billing and cooing; but now, by Heaven, you'll pay the piper!"

Martin gasped before the wordy onslaught. But Carew's hot words, and his appearance, conveyed to Martin's alert mind a startling truth—it was not lust for treasure that inspired Wild Bob's verbal flogging, or venemous glances; it was jealousy, a wild, hate-filled jealousy of him, Martin Blake. Ruth was the core of Carew's rage.

"Come—where is that code?" went on Carew. "Speak up lively, now! By Heaven, if you sulk, I'll jolly well draw the truth out of you! Here, Ichi, call up that finger devil of yours and we'll see if a little gullet-twisting will loosen this cub's tongue! Here—Moto!"

THE wooden-faced ju-jitsu man, who had been seated on the divan, got on his feet and moved toward Martin's chair. His face was absolutely expressionless, his attitude impersonal, but he was rubbing his hands together and stroking his fingers as if to make them supple for the work that lay before them.

Martin observed the maneuver with a suddenly contracted heart. He had a vivid recollection of the terrific pain that accompanied the former application of those writhing fingers to his person. He cautiously worked the handcuffs down upon his hands so that a quick movement would fling them off.

If he was to be put to torture, he would first fight! He eye-marked a carving-knife lying on the table within leaping reach.

But Ichi intervened and relieved the tension of the moment. He halted the businesslike bravo with a word.

"Let us not use Moto just yet," he said to Carew. "Our dear Mr. Blake does not understand, perhaps. We will explain the matter. I am sure he will not then be of stubbornness. You know what we decided upon, captain? We do not want to use Moto just yet."

"One would think you were advocate for the fellow," sneered Wild Bob. "Oh, all right—have your way. We'll save Moto till we call in the chit."

Moto resumed his seat at a nod from Ichi. Martin breathed heavily with relief and relaxed, readjusting his bonds. Ichi turned to him.

"My dear Mr. Blake," commenced the Jap, "let me repeat that I am your very good friend. It makes me very, very sorrowful to view you in your present condition of uncomfortableness, and I trust you will reflect that resentment of Fate is idle. We understand Fate, we gentlemen, and accept what the gods decree.

"So, I will be of complete frankness in explaining our need, Mr. Blake. We thought it was ill fate when, seven days ago, our schooner was wrecked upon the rocks that guard this mountain. Even though we had searched with diligence for this very spot, we regarded it as fortune of much badness to be compelled to land on the Fire Mountain from an open boat, with but half our company, and without provisions. During days of hunger we cursed Fate. And all the while Fate was preparing our succor. So—if we are wise we accept Fate, Mr. Blake.

"Yet Fate has not been of too great kindness to us, for we could not uncover the so precious lodestone which drew us all to this desolate corner of the world. Fate intended we should wait until the honorable *Cohasset* should arrive.

"You see, the translation of the scarlet writing which the eminent and worthy Smatt furnished us, after the occasion of your unfortunate defection, was lost in the wreck. We had, we thought, a memory of truthfulness of the paper, for we had read it muchly. We were mistaken. We have not discovered the ambergris, though we have searched with industriousness.

"We have also searched the ship for the original writing. We have not as yet obtained it. The young woman has informed us with much readiness of a place where the paper is. But there are certain reasons—" Ichi glanced at Carew—"why we may not test the truth of Miss Le Moyne's statement.

"So, we look to you, my dear Mr. Blake, to enlighten us, to dispute or verify the young woman's words. We ask you, where is the whaling man's writing? And before you give answer; I would with much earnestness beg of you to reflect that Fate is undoubtedly with us, that you and yours have not favor with the gods. It is wisdom to accept Fate! And reflect also, please, that the young woman's immunity from—let us say—physical persuasion to speak, does not extend to your respected self. And bear in mind, please, that the throat-hold you have already experienced is by no means the hold of most painfulness, out of the several score my Moto is of expertness in applying. So—where is the code?"

"Come, spit it out!" growled Carew.

Martin reflected, though not upon Fate, as the Japanese advised. He knew he must speak. Moto was quietly massaging his deadly fingers, and Martin did not relish the torture he knew those digits could inflict. But should he speak truth?

He wondered if Ruth had really answered their question, and if she had told them truly where the writing was. One thing vastly cheered him—he gathered from Ichi's words that Ruth was safe from molestation so far. He decided he had best tell them the truth. It would not help them, and it could not harm Little Billy, for poor Billy was gone.

"Billy Corcoran has the code," he said. "I saw him place it in his pocket last night."

"Ah—so!" exclaimed Ichi. He exchanged a significant glance with Carew. "What unfortunateness! Just as the young woman said!"

"Little Billy, eh!" said Wild Bob. "Well, young fellow, can you tell us what became of that blasted hunchback?"

Martin almost leaped from his chair. What! Had Little Billy escaped? Did they know what had become of Little Billy? Martin had accepted without question the fact that Little Billy was dead. The probabilities, and the boatswain's conviction, had convinced him. But now . . .

"I don't know what has become of him," he told Carew. "You ought to know. He had the watch on deck when you came out of the fog, last night."

" —— queer!" muttered Carew. Then to Ichi: "I tell you, doctor, he must have been settled and dumped overside with the rest. We fixed every one who was awake, except this fellow, Blake. The hunchback must have been knifed and thrown over without being recognized."

"No, there were only three, and the cripple was not of them," returned Ichi.

Not of them! Martin's heart was pounding joyfully. Then Little Billy was alive.

"Well, he isn't on the ship," asserted Carew. "He isn't in the hold with that

fo'c's'le crowd, nor aft, here, nor hidden anywhere about the vessel. We know that. Let us not waste any more time—we'll get the information the other way. Call in the minx. Perhaps it will tame some of that cursed spirit of hers to witness her pretty darling, here, being made uncomfortable!"

He accompanied his remark with a hateful glance toward Martin, a glance that was filled with cruel anticipation. But neither look nor words much disquieted Martin's mounting spirits. "In the hold with the fo'c's'le crowd!" Carew had said. Then the boatswain would not have to chance breaking into the forepeak. He need only get into the hold to join the remnant of the crew, and it was a stout remnant if only three had been slaughtered. Why, the boatswain must already have joined them; be leading them now in an attempt to break out of the hold. And Little Billy was alive, and at large!

Martin wriggled his wrists in the handcuffs and stiffened tensely in his seat. Almost, he expected to hear that instant the commotions of battle from the deck, and to see his friends burst into the cabin. He eyed wistfully the carving-knife on the table and marked it for his weapon. No, he could contemplate these thugs about him now without that hopeless sinking of the heart; he could even withstand torture with fortitude born of hope. For there was a fighting chance.

"Go knock on the door and fetch her out," said Carew to Ichi. To the silent Moto he added: "All right, Moto, we are ready for you. Stand by!"

CHAPTER XVII

TWO MEN AND A MAID

ICHI rapped softly on the door of Captain Dabney's room. The door opened a space, and a clear, fearless voice demanded—

"Well, what do you wish?"

The happy thrill Martin felt at the sound of that undaunted voice was nowise dampened by the knowledge that Moto, the torturer, stood behind his chair, with fingers ready to Carew's bidding. Martin, for the instant, had but eyes and ears of love.

"My dear miss, we would consider it a favor of much greatness if you would but spare us a few moments of your honored time," said Ichi, bowing profoundly to the crack in the door. "If you will but grant us the delightfulness of your presence for a very short time—then you may return to carefulness of the honorable Dabney."

Ruth stepped out of the berth and softly closed the door behind her. Then she faced about and saw Martin sitting stiffly on the edge of his chair, with his arms behind his back.

"Oh, Martin!" she cried.

Martin caught his breath as he returned her look, while a sudden surge of feeling clogged his throat and stabbed his heart with a thrust half pain, half pleasure. She was beautiful! She was glorious!

She stood there, swaying easily to the gentle motion of the riding ship, her wide-open eyes full upon his, with a look that held a world of anxious love. Her face appeared like a bright, rare flower, in contrast with her blue blouse and skirt, and the dark wood-paneling behind her. The night had placed its mark upon her features—there were dark circles beneath her eyes, and a droop at the corners of the sweet mouth. But courageous self-reliance was still her bearing; and the haggard hints of suffering on her face but enhanced its loveliness.

She was glorious, superb! Martin, his own love in his kindling gaze, recalled of a sudden how she had looked that night when he had stolen the kiss. A glancing moonbeam had that time lighted her beauty. So, too, this time a light ray brightened her—a sunbeam darting through the open skylight set her in a golden frame.

A sharp, sobbing intake of breath came from the head of the table where Carew sat. Ruth directed her gaze from Martin to the outlaw, and her mouth became grim, and her eyes, but now so soft with love, became hard and alert.

Martin, too, looked at Wild Bob. And the sight of the man's face brewed wild rage in Martin's soul, stirred the elemental instinct that makes the male fight to keep his mate. For Carew was also staring at Ruth, much the same as Martin had been staring. His face was hungry, avid, with desire—desire for the wonderful woman before him. His very soul was in his burning gaze, and it was an ugly, bestial soul.

The man was mad—mad with love, insane with a heedless, reckless passion for the girl. Martin could well understand now

Wild Bob Carew's turbulent and persistent wooing of Ruth. His whole ruthless, lawless nature was dominated by his evil passion; for so long balked, his love had fed wildly upon itself till now it was his master.

Yet, in that brief, illuminating moment when Martin regarded the other's passion-heated countenance, he beheld something that soothed his rage, checked his panic, and made his heart suddenly swell with pride and tenderness for his love. For behind the lustful glistening in Carew's eyes there lurked a shadow of fear.

Carew was afraid of the girl! Martin, with the lover's insight, discerned and interpreted that lurking shadow. For Carew's fear was bred of the man's nature, and made strong by the intensity of his wild emotion; the fear was a vicious nature shamed, an impure love abashed, by the virgin goodness of the woman.

The fleeting glance Martin had of the conflict in Carew's mind conveyed meaningful information to his own love-sharpened senses. Carew was baffled by the girl.

It was Ichi who interrupted the tense silence that followed Ruth's entry. He beckoned to Yip, and then bowed low before Ruth.

"But, miss, will you not be seated?" he said.

Charley Bo Yip left his work at the table and brought a chair, placing it, at the Jap's direction, directly opposite Martin, but several feet distant. Ruth sat down, ignoring Ichi, but smiling an acknowledgment of the service to the impassive Chinaman. Her hand, Martin noticed, brushed against Yip's hand as she took her seat. Yip returned to his labors and immediately left the cabin with a tray-load of dishes.

Martin's speech at last broke through the host of emotions and impressions that had swarmed upon him during the past few moments. Ruth's eyes were on him again. For a moment there was a swift, though broken, conversation.

"Oh, Ruth, how is it with you? Have they——"

"Safe, Martin. And you—oh, the beasts! Your arms!"

"Nothing, dear. Captain Dabney——"

"Alive — unconscious. The bo's'n — Billy? What——"

"Billy's alive, Ruth! Free! How——"

"Enough of that!" broke in Carew roughly. "You two were not brought together for conversation. Any more of that chatter and I'll have Moto place a finger on 'dear Martin's' windpipe!"

As if obeying an order already given, Moto became alive. Martin had for the time being forgotten the ju-jitsu man standing behind his chair, but now Moto suddenly leaned forward and gently stroked his neck with long and supple fingers.

Ruth's eyes widened at the action, and horror crept into them as she looked past Martin and observed the cruel, impassive calm of Moto's yellow face. She turned to Carew.

"You beast! Have you brought us together, then, to torture us?" she cried.

Martin saw the red blood mantle the renegade's cheeks. But Carew held check on his tongue. It was Ichi who answered the girl's scornful words.

"Torture? Ah—no, no! It is, ah, persuasion," said Ichi. "But let us trust, my dear miss, you will not compel us to persuade. Believe me, my honored captain and myself are your very fine friends; it would muchly harrow our gentlemanness to order Moto to make painful the person of esteemed Mr. Blake, and thus make disturbful your own honorable mind. We would not like to be hurtful to dear Mr. Blake—ah, no."

"You gloating, yellow cat!" was Ruth's response. "Why, you are torturing him now. Look at his arms!"

"Well, well! You seem to be greatly exercised over the comfort of your pet!" broke out Carew angrily; his mouth was sneering; Martin saw the devils of jealousy were prodding him. "Well, milady, your fancy boy is ironed up because we have learned from somewhat harsh experience that he is rather impulsive in the use of his hands. I do not care to have him assault me and be compelled to kill him — at least, not yet. His arms will remain as they are. And as to whether Moto will work upon him, why, that depends upon you, my girl!"

Martin drew a breath of thankful relief. He had tried to check Ruth's outburst with a frown; he feared her words might cause them to unlock the handcuffs. Cruelly as his arms ached, he much preferred the pain to having them discover the cuffs had been tampered with. If his bracelets were once closely examined, and they learned he could remove them at will, he knew that a prompt investigation would forestall the boatswain.

Carew's decision pleased him. He knew there was no danger now of their loosing his bonds—they were pleased to see him suffer; Carew, because of jealousy, and Ichi, because of native cruelty. He determined to bear his lot with stoicism. If they were about to command this yellow fiend with the deadly fingers to torture him, why, he would stand it. He would not give them the satisfaction, nor Ruth the pain, of hearing him squeal. He would keep his arms behind him and his mouth shut though Moto did his worst.

"It depends upon me? Why, what do you mean?" demanded Ruth, staring from Carew to Ichi.

"Ah yes, on you," purred Ichi. "Just a morsel of information, you could with such easiness give——"

"Tell them nothing!" burst out Martin. "Don't mind me, dear! They can't hurt——"

The fingers suddenly pressed hard upon a spot on the back of Martin's neck. His speech was choked. Sharp pain flooded his body. Despite himself, Martin squirmed.

"Oh, you fiends! Stop! Stop!" cried Ruth.

She sprang to her feet, with the evident intent of flinging herself upon Moto. Ichi grasped her two wrists. She exclaimed with pain and sank back into her seat.

"Here—stop that, Ichi!" roared Carew. "None of your —— tricks with the girl! Don't dare place a hand on her again! Be still, Ruth! Your darling is not being murdered! Ease up, Moto! Next time wait for orders!"

The fingers lifted from Martin's neck. The relief from the shooting pain was instant, though his misused nerves continued to prick their protest.

Ruth panted to master her emotion. Then she flung hot words at Carew, words colored with scorn and loathing.

"Oh, you unspeakable brute!" she cried. "You coward! It is like you to find pleasure in inflicting pain upon a helpless man, and a defenseless woman! What is it you wish me to tell you? Come, speak up. Don't sit cringing in that chair!"

"By Heaven, girl, you'll go too far!" commenced Carew.

"Ah — we wish to know such a little thing," interrupted Ichi, answering Ruth's demand. "We wish to know the directions that lead to the ambergris hidden ashore, in the mountain. Ah, yes, you recall you boasted of your knowledge of the code directions, and dared us to unlock your memory? But now you will so nicely tell us—yes, please?"

"Yes, that is what we are after, Ruth," added Carew. "And, by Jove, you should be jolly well thanking me, instead of calling me names. You know well enough that but for me, Moto would be playing his fingers upon your nerves, instead of Blake's."

"I see. And in order to spare me, you are going to torture this bound man in my presence, in order that his agony will make me speak!" retorted Ruth. "What a hypocritical beast you are, Captain Carew! I suppose that next you will apologize to Mr. Blake for the inconvenience my stubbornness is causing him. Of course, you are sorry for him!"

Carew swore at the girl's gibing.

"Sorry!" he exclaimed. "By Heaven! I'd like to twist the young blighter's neck with my bare hands! Don't go too far, milady, or it will be the worse for this fine lover of yours!"

He suddenly left his chair, and strode to Martin's side. He favored Martin with an angry, jealous glare, and then turned tempestuously upon the girl.

"Look at me, woman!" he cried. "By —— ! Am I not a *man?* Compare us, girl! Compare *me* with this half-baked cub you ogle so sweetly! Am I not the better man? Why, I could break that booby in two! Compare us, girl!"

He drew himself up with shoulders back and stood there, a splendid figure of a man. His face was flushed and working, showing plainly the jealous passions and the intolerable longing for the girl's approval which had whipped him into this melodramatic outburst. Ruth faced him with silent, contemptuous scorn. Martin's gorge rose to fever pitch. With difficulty he restrained himself from slipping the cuffs and springing at the insolent egotist's throat.

"It is not ambergris I want!" went on Carew. "It is you, Ruth. I want you of your own free will. Look at me, Ruth! Am I hideous, or a weakling? By Heaven! Women in plenty have come to me ere now, and without my pleading! I am the mate for you. This pup, this runaway clerk, has no right to you. I could kill him for his presumption! Come to me. Ruth you shall be anything, everything, you wish! I'll

make you a fine lady—a queen—I know islands——"

"An island where you will install me as queen of your harem, I suppose," interrupted Ruth acidly. "Have you informed the other ladies you mentioned of your intentions?"

"You are the only one. There will never be another, I swear to you!" avowed Carew. "Those other women—they did not matter. But you—you will be my wife! A true marriage. I can give you a great name, a clean name, not the name of Carew."

"And I suppose we are to live up to your great name with the treasure I am to deliver into your hands?" scoffed Ruth.

"No, no! I do not want you for that!" asserted Carew. "It is you, you alone! The ambergris goes to my employers, to Ichi, here, and his partners. I must get it for them. It is the bargain I made. My own share will not be great, Ruth; I would gladly give a hundred times as much for your favor. But I am rich, girl. I have plenty salted away. I'll make my peace with my family, and we shall go home, to England. You'll be my wife, my legal wife!"

"I would rather be dead than your wife!" declared Ruth with vehemence. "I hate you!"

"And I say I will take you, hating me, rather than lose you!" returned Carew. His manner of impassioned pleading changed abruptly to threatening. "I'll beg no more of you, my haughty minx! But I will suggest that you reflect upon the reality of your condition. In any event, what will become of yourself? Hey? And what will become of this darling crew of yours, we hold prisoners below? And what will become of this scrub, here in the chair—this apple of your eye?

"By Jove! You had better jolly well think about it! Would you rather have your grandfather, and the crew, and this lover of yours, set upon some safe shore—or, have the other thing happen to them? It rests with you!"

Martin's rage mounted to boiling-point during Wild Bob's remarkable wooing. The man's raw insults made him furious; the stormy browbeating of the woman he loved set him a-tingle with the strongest desire he had ever known—a desire to fling himself upon this sneering wretch and vindicate his manhood by battle. His hands crawled in their restraint, in their lust to batter upon that supercilious face. But he dare not. He knew that an outbreak on his part would mean the death of their chance to regain the ship.

So he held himself in check, biting his lips over his enforced impotence. But Carew's final threat wrung speech from him, for he saw speculation in Ruth's eyes, as she measured her tormentor. The dreadful thought occurred to Martin, "Ruth will barter herself to save the rest of us!"

"No, no, Ruth!" he cried out. "Pay no attention!"

"Shut up!" roared Carew, wheeling furiously upon him. "If you speak again, I'll have Moto put a clapper on your tongue!" He turned to Ruth again. "And now, my girl, you will do the begging! We'll listen to you beg for this pretty boy! Are you going to tell us how to reach the ambergris, or shall I order Moto to commence his work?"

"The information—ah, but I am certain the lady will tell us with much gladness," spoke up Ichi.

He had been waiting patiently and impassively while Carew underwent his travail of heart. Now he was again his smirking, leering self.

"You know ju-jitsu," continued Carew. "Moto is an expert—he will pick your darling to pieces and make of him a screaming lunatic, here, before your eyes, unless you speak. And if you speak, be sure and speak truth; for Blake goes ashore with the gang, and God help him if you direct us wrongly! Now decide, please!"

Ruth looked at Martin soberly. Martin smiled at her, but his mind was busied with fresh information. He was to go ashore with the gang! So Carew said. Then this yellow band would be divided. If he could hold them ashore until the boatswain attempted his coup, the odds would not be so great against the *Cohasset* lads. If he only knew how the boatswain was progressing down below; whether he had gained to the forecastle crowd! Anyway, it was a chance to take.

"Martin, dear, I had better tell them," said Ruth.

"Yes, yes, tell them," urged Martin feverishly. "Why—I know the code myself, by heart. I'll tell them."

"Ho, ho! See how your brave knight stands the gaff!" guffawed Carew to Ruth.

Ruth stared searchingly at Martin. Martin writhed in spirit. He longed to shout to her that he was not craven, that it was policy dictated his course.

But Ruth was evidently satisfied by what she saw in his face, for she smiled brightly and said without any trace of disappointment:

"Of course, Martin. It would be foolish to allow them to torture the words out of either of us. I shall speak."

"Ah—but just a moment!" exclaimed Ichi.

He drew a pencil and note-book from his pocket, and extended them to Ruth.

"If the young lady will be of a kindness," he said, "she will perhaps write the directions down on the paper. Then we shall compare it with dear Mr. Blake's directions. Yes, please?"

Ruth took the proffered articles and, without hesitation, scribbled a couple of lines. Ichi recovered the book.

"Ah—so!" he exclaimed, after glancing at the writing. "Now, Mr. Blake, will you be of such a kindness? I make the comparing. Yes, please?"

Martin spoke, also without hesitation. His memory was exceptional, and he had read often and attentively John Winters' code writing.

"South end beach—in elephant head—four starboard—windy cave—two port—aloft—north corner dry cave," Martin rattled off.

"Ah! So, it is of a correctness!" sang out Ichi with more feeling than Martin had yet seen him exhibit. He waved the book at Carew. "They speak the same. And observe, captain, here is our error so great. It says 'aloft.' We searched with much diligence all about, and beneath. But we did not search overhead—so missed the cave of dryness. But now, ah!"

The little wretch almost danced for happiness.

Carew accepted the intelligence with calmness. It was apparent to Martin that Carew had spoken true words to Ruth—the man was more interested in the girl than in the treasure.

"Well, you had better go ashore after the stuff," he said to Ichi. "Take a full boat's crew, and Blake, here—yes, be sure and take Blake with you. I'll remain aboard—snatch forty winks, if I can, for I'll get no rest tonight if we pull out of this hole. You may return to your grandfather, Ruth!"

Ruth stood up. She half turned, as if to step for the door of Captain Dabney's room, then, swift as a flash, she darted to Martin's side and threw her arms about him. Her cool cheek pressed against his for an instant, and she breathed swift words in his ear.

"Courage, dear. There is a plan——"

Carew, with a snarled oath, placed his hand upon her shoulder, and drew her away with some violence, though he lifted his hand immediately.

"Nothing like that!" he admonished her. "By Heaven! I'll not stand by and watch you cuddling that cub! Get back to your room—go!"

Ruth threw a beaming, hope-filled glance to Martin. Then Captain Dabney's door closed behind her.

CHAPTER XVIII

THROUGH THE ELEPHANT'S HEAD

THE Japanese gentleman might ramble at length in his speech, but he proved himself to be direct and speedy enough in action. Martin found that Dr. Ichi was disposed to hurry. No sooner had Ruth disappeared within the captain's room than he commenced to act upon Carew's orders.

A volley of staccato Japanese relieved the grim Moto of his sinister attendance upon Martin and sent him scurrying forward to the deck, to Martin's vast satisfaction.

Next, he held a low-voiced consultation with Carew, who had stretched himself out upon the divan at the after end of the room. This talk was inaudible to Martin, but at its conclusion Carew said:

"Very well. If you find you need assistance, signal off and I'll send another boat. And if you are going to take Moto with you, have Asoki send a hand aft to stand guard in the cabin while I sleep. Best to keep an eye on the girl."

Ichi turned to Martin.

"So, we have made prepare," he stated.

He drew a revolver from his hip-pocket, examined it ostentatiously, and placed it carefully in a side coat-pocket. Martin, regarding the weapon with covetous eyes, recognized it as one of the ship's arms.

"Now, my dear Mr. Blake, you will be of such kindness to go before me to the deck? Yes, please?"

Martin arose promptly and started for the alleyway leading to the main deck. In his mind mingled triumph and trepidation—triumph because he knew that Ichi's expedition to the shore would lessen the number of the crew holding the ship and thereby aid the boatswain's plan for delivery which he was sure was maturing in the darkness of the hold; trepidation because despite his resolution to fortitude he was more than a little uneasy concerning his own future. If he went ashore with Ichi, would he live to return? Had Carew given orders as to his disposition? He had intercepted glances filled with a smoldering hate, during that whispered conversation a moment since.

Martin had a feeling that he was the object of that discussion, there at the other end of the cabin. Was Carew whispering murderous orders into Ichi's ready ear? The man was smarting under Ruth's scorn. What more natural to Carew's pitiless nature than to sop his mad jealousy with his rival's death?

The Japanese gentleman, cruel and vindictive beneath his surface suavity, would, Martin felt, be pleased to put a period to his existence. Was it merely to cow him that Ichi so carefully examined his gun? Or was it to have cruel sport with him, as Ichi had attempted to have with the boatswain?

"Whatever way," ran Martin's thought, "my job is to get as many of these yellow imps ashore as is possible, and hold them there as long as I can, so that the bosun, leading his outbreak, will have a chance of success. What if Ichi does let daylight through me? It is for Ruth!"

Closely followed by Ichi, Martin traversed the passage and stepped out on deck, and found himself bathed with the sunlight of a bright, calm morning. At Ichi's word, he paused outside the door.

Ichi continued across the deck and spoke to a man who was shouting over the rail to a boat crew overside. Martin recognized the man; he was the same bow-legged, muscular little Jap who had acted as his guide that night in the Black Cruiser. He wore an air of authority; Martin concluded he was the mate of Carew's yellow following, perhaps the fellow, Asoki, Wild Bob had mentioned.

The mate turned from Ichi and hallooed forward. A man who was sitting on the sunny deck, abaft the galley, arose and came aft in obedience to the hail. Martin saw the fellow carried one of the *Cohasset's* rifles. He paused while Ichi gave him some terse directions, then he passed Martin and entered the cabin. Ichi and Asoki then proceeded to inspect the boat overside.

Martin's eager eyes ranged about the decks. What he saw did not encourage his hopes. For just before him, on the main hatch, sat two impassive yellow men, one with a rifle across his knees, the other holding a shotgun. Forward, the galley blocked his view of the fore-hatch; but an armed man leaned against the rail at the break of the forecastle. So he knew that both hatches were well guarded from the deck.

The two men on the main hatch were of alert and efficient appearance; and Martin knew that Carew's men, being seal-hunters, must be experienced and expert shots. Martin regarded them gloomily. What chance for a successful rising in the face of these armed watch-dogs? The lads would be slaughtered, even though their numbers were even.

The Japs before him were dressed in clothes he recognized as belonging to his shipmates. He concluded that the invaders were already domiciled in the forecastle; probably a half of them were even then occupying the imprisoned men's bunks. Even so, the few armed men on deck would be more than a match for the boatswain.

If he only knew what time the boatswain would make his attempt! It was ten in the morning now—he had noticed the cabin clock—and the boatswain might wait till night, not knowing of the shore expedition. How long could he manage to hold the party ashore? If there only was some other, safer plan! Plan! What was it Ruth tried to tell him? Had she also a plan?

Such were Martin's troubled thoughts during the moment of his leisure. They were black bodings, and they almost killed the cheerful spark that had been born in his heart during the tilt of wits in the cabin. The menacing peace of the deck occupied all his mind. He barely noticed the mountain looming blackly beyond the ship's bows, and on either side.

Smoke was pouring out of the galley smoke-stack. The rattle of pots against iron came to his ears. Yip was preparing another meal; the Japs, Martin reflected, were not denying their stomachs. Probably making up for the enforced starvation they had lately suffered.

He wondered if the men imprisoned in the hold had been given food, or whether they were being starved, like the boatswain, because of Dr. Ichi's whim. Beneath the Japanese gentleman's velvet exterior existed a merciless humor. He delighted in cruelty, and Martin sensed that, for some reason, he bore a sly and implacable hatred toward the entire company of the *Cohasset*.

Martin wondered just what position Ichi filled in Carew's following. In the cabin, his manner toward Carew had been of a man toward an equal, rather than a subordinate to a leader. Martin wondered if the yellow crew were at bottom Carew's men or Ichi's. They jumped to Ichi's orders; there, at the rail, Carew's mate was actually fawning upon Ichi's words. Ichi was plainly the owners' man.

Yip stuck his head out of the galley door, looked aft, and then withdrew from sight. Immediately after there issued from the galley the shrill caterwauling of a Chinese song, and a renewed rattle of pots.

Martin listened resentfully. Charley Bo Yip's cheerful acceptance of change of masters angered him. He had been quite friendly with Yip during the passage, and he knew the Chinaman was a veteran of the Chinese revolution and a professed enemy of all Japanese. Yet here he was working for these same Japanese, apparently content with events, and serenely indifferent to the fate of his shipmates. During the scene in the cabin, Martin had divined from Ichi's bearing toward Yip that the thugs from the *Dawn* regarded the Chinaman—or rather, disregarded him—contemptuously, as one of a despised and slavish race, born to serve obediently and menially. Which he was, thought Martin disgustedly.

During this short period of his musing, Martin's eyes were not idle. He suddenly was aware of the cause for Ichi's delay.

From the recesses forward appeared Moto and another man, coming aft. Moto carried a lantern in each hand, and the fellow who followed him bore a watch-tackle on his shoulder. As they passed the galley, Yip's song ceased, and the Chinaman also stepped out on deck and ambled aft.

Martin wasted no glance on the cook. He watched with interest the Japs. The burdens they bore were to aid in the exploration of the caves, he knew. At the sight of the lanterns, a dim plan for future action germinated in his mind.

The two Japs reached the spot where Ichi and Asoki stood waiting. They handed their loads over the rail to the waiting hands below. Then they followed, by way of a Jacob's ladder.

Charley Bo Yip approached, bound for the cabin entrance. He passed close behind Martin, almost brushing against Martin's handcuffed hands. He stepped on into the alleyway without slackening his stride, but Martin marked the silent passage with a suddenly thumping heart — for Yip had pressed a piece of paper into one of his manacled hands. Ichi turned to him and motioned—

"Come, we are of readiness, Mr. Blake!"

Martin twisted his hand around and thrust the paper into his hip pocket. Then he stepped forward to the rail.

A COUPLE of moments later, Martin sat in the stern-sheets of a whaleboat. He was much shaken and somewhat bruised from his attempt to negotiate a Jacob's ladder with his hands behind him, but his swift descent had not dimmed his mind. His first thought, even as he clambered over the brig's rail, was to count the men in the shore party. His fall hardly interrupted him.

There were four men at the oars, he saw. And beside him stood Moto, manning the steering oar. On the opposite gunwale perched Ichi. Six of them!

"That will leave nine of them aboard," ran Martin's mind. "Ichi said only three were killed last night. They would be Rimoa and Oomak and MacLean. Then there are eight forecastle hands, and Chips, and the bosun, down below. Numbers are even, more than even! But odds! Oh, if only a couple of those rifles were in the bosun's hands! If only Ichi would take them ashore!"

Martin searched the boat with his eyes, but no firearms were visible. If the boatswain and the lads reached the deck, they would have those armed watchers to reckon with. Hopeless!

At a sharp order from the steersman, the four oarsmen gave way smartly, and the boat left the ship's side, headed beachward. It was not one of the *Cohasset's* boats, Martin noted. The dingey, in which Little Billy had sounded to anchorage yesterday, still rode to its painter under the counter. The rest of their own boats were still snug on

the skids. The whale-boat was Carew's boat in which he had boarded them.

Little Billy! The sight of the dingey brought the hunchback into Martin's racing thoughts. Where was Little Billy? The paper Yip had slipped him, fairly burned in his pocket. But, of course, he dare not attempt to read it here in the midst of his enemies. For he had not the slightest doubt the paper was a note written by Little Billy, and conveyed by Yip's friendly hand.

Good old Yip! Martin felt shame of his recent low estimate of the Chinaman. Yip was fooling the Japs—perhaps coached by the safely hidden hunchback!

Martin's hopes leaped again. Why, thought he, with Little Billy's fertile mind on the job, and Yip free and friendly, their chance of success in an outbreak was greatly increased. Likely enough Little Billy was in communication with the men in the hold. A well-timed surprise might overcome the terrible handicap of the guns. If he only knew what that paper in his pocket contained! Well, perhaps he would know soon, if things went right.

Ichi's right side was toward him. Martin carefully noted the revolver-butt peeping from the coat-pocket. That revolver occupied an important place in the plan that was forming in Martin's mind. He carefully scanned the other occupants of the boat. So far as he could see their only weapons were sheath-knives.

The tide was ebbing swiftly and the *Cohasset* tugged at her cable, bow on to the beach. The breach between the ship and the whale-boat widened; the panoramic view of the mountain and the little bay interrupted Martin's thoughts. He twisted about in his seat, and sent his gaze about the cove in an encircling sweep, thus gaining his first clear idea of the actual geography of the place.

Nature had formed the bay, he saw, by pinching a small chunk out of the huge cone of the volcano. The bay was a watery wedge cutting into the mountain to a depth of about twelve hundred yards, a half-mile wide at the entrance, and narrowing down to a bare half-hundred yards of narrow beach at the point of the wedge.

The *Cohasset* was anchored about five hundred yards from the beach, and at a like distance on either side of her the flanking cliffs rose sheer from the water. The waters of the bay were quiet, but, at the mouth, Martin saw the seas beating fiercely upon the girdling reef, smashing thunderously upon jutting, jagged rocks, and sending the white spray cascading into the sunshine. But he searched in vain for signs of a wreck. He interrupted Ichi's reverie with a question.

"Where did the *Dawn* strike?"

To his surprise, the Japanese answered promptly.

"On the opposite side of the island—on the reef. Ah, that was a happening of much terribleness, Mr. Blake. It was night and fog—the same utterly darkness that was of such disaster to you honorable gentlemen last night. Honorable Carew did not suspect the nearness of land. The rock pierced our bottom and we sank with immediateness. Ah—it was of much sadness! We saved not food or clothes and but half our number. We rowed away.

"After while, there came to us a morning of much niceness, like the present one, and we found that the schooner had been altogether taken, as honorable Carew remarked by one god of the sea, named David Jones. So we rowed around the volcano and came in this bay, and I knew the place from the memory I had of hearing the reading, so long ago, in Honolulu.

"Ah, but the days we spent here before the worthy *Cohasset* was sighted were days of much badness! We thought you had come and departed, for we did not find the ambergris. We thought we would all have to go out from hunger and exposure. We thought it would be of much sadness to go out in this place of blackness; the spirits of our honorable ancestors would regard us with much unkindness if we came from this evil place." The man suddenly leered upon Martin. "How would you like to go out in this place of bleakness? Ah—what a sadness!"

He turned and stared at the fantastic, brooding face of the rapidly nearing rock.

"I will with frankness say I do not like this place," he concluded. "I shall be of gladness when I see the last of that smoke, up there, and feel no more the shakes of awfulness."

They were within a few yards of the beach. Martin stared upward. The mountain tapered steeply to the crater thousands of feet above him. The yellow-brown smoke poured upward lazily, and he was sensible, as on the day before, of an acrid, unpleasant taste in the air. Also, as when he had obtained his first fog-obscured

view of the mountain from the topgallant-yard, he felt oppressed as he looked at that desolate wilderness of crazily jumbled rock towering above him; the sunlight, which sparkled upon the water, failed to brighten the mountain's somber tone, and the nightmare architecture looming above him shivered him with dread.

The openings of numberless caves gaped blackly, like blind eyes. The myriad-voiced screeching of the sea-birds added to the bleakness of the aspect. As Moto swept the boat through the gentle surf that laved the little beach, the Fire Mountain was invested, in Martin's excited mind, with personality, with a malignant, evil personality.

In truth, Martin looked upon himself as doomed. "How would you like to go out?" Ichi had queried; and his manner had made the question a promise. Well, he would try not to go out alone. His work was cut out for him, and it was desperate work. There was slim chance, he knew, of surviving the execution of his plan, but he contemplated his probable death with the high courage of self-sacrifice.

His life, he felt, was a small price to pay for the recovery of the ship and the freeing of his sweetheart. For he was convinced that the boatswain's success was dependent upon his keeping these six Japs on shore. He felt sure his comrades, warned by Yip and Little Billy, would seize the opportunity presented by Carew's divided forces. He meant to fight to keep the Japs separated.

As the boat grounded, and he stood up to leap ashore, he wriggled his wrists in the cuffs, making sure he could free himself with a jerk. He might die, but he vowed he would take some of these yellow devils with him on his passage out.

Also, he reflected, it would make little difference to him, even if he remained docile. The issue would be the same. He was certain Ichi would murder him, so soon as the treasure was uncovered. He was certain Carew had commanded that very ending.

So, it was with a mind made up to grasp any desperate chance, with a courage utterly reckless, that Martin disembarked on the volcanic sand of Fire Mountain beach.

THEY had landed at one end of the beach. The first object Martin's curious eyes encountered was the "Elephant Head." John Winters' directions ran in his mind—"south end beach, in elephant head." That curiously fashioned jutting rock was the elephant head; cleanly sculptured were the rounded head, slab ears, arched trunk, all gigantic. Beneath the rock-snout was a narrow slit about six feet high by half as wide. It was, Martin knew, the entrance the whaleman had written of.

But Martin had little time to inspect the beach. Ichi commanded dispatch. Martin noticed with surprise that as soon as Ichi touched foot on the sand, his accustomed phlegm was replaced by visible nervousness.

Ichi ordered, and the four sailors ran the boat up on the beach. Then, Moto leading the way, carrying the two lanterns, they all trooped toward the cave entrance.

Martin used his eyes as he walked. There were, he saw, many cave openings on a level with the beach. One in particular was a gaping cavern. Ichi, by his side, and talkative, indicated this place.

"Where we lived," he informed. "Very nasty place—damp, and of coldness. But our torches were poor, and driftwood of much scarceness, so we dare not investigate greatly the interior for better place. Our wood was all gone, and we feared muchly we must break up the boat, when Fate with so great a kindness sent the honorable Dabney to rescue us."

"A queer rescue, you murderous little wretch!" thought Martin. But aloud, he said, "What did you live on?"

They had fallen behind the others. Martin considered swiftly whether or not to fall upon his companion now. He was certain he could get the gun, and commence shooting, before the others assailed him. But he decided promptly that it would not do. They would witness the affair from the ship.

"Oh—we eat the gulls," replied Ichi. "And the shell-fish, and a seal that was dead—ah, he was long dead and of great nastiness! But mostly it was the shell-fish. See the many shells on the sand?"

Martin looked. He gulped a swift, deep breath to keep from crying out, and stopped dead in his tracks. He stared into the yawning mouth of the cave Ichi was speaking about, his heart thumping furiously. Good Heaven! Had he seen a ghost? Was it a crazy trick of his overwrought mind? Or had he actually beheld, for a fraction of a second, a white face framed in the dense gloom of the cave's interior? But that face!

"Ah—but do not pause, my dear Mr. Blake," said Ichi with a hint of sarcasm. "It

is of a great interest, I know, but the view that awaits you as we seek the ambergris inside, is of much more interestness. Come! See, our dear Moto has the lanterns lighted!"

Martin with difficulty maintained a disinterested expression. He recovered his stride, and they joined the others beneath the overhanging elephant rock. Moto and Ichi held for a moment a chattering interchange of their native speech.

Martin peered into this other opening, his agitated mind half-expecting to see the startling vision again, flashing white in the interior blackness. But beyond a few feet of sand floor and black lava walls, he saw nothing. The opening in the elephant head led into a narrow gallery, a hallway into the mountain.

A blast of hot, sulfur-tainted air swirled out of the opening. It made his eyes smart. Coincidentally, his ears were assailed by strange sound. It came out of the black hole, and it was like the wailing of souls in torment. It was a dolorous whistling that increased to a shrill screeching, then died away sobbingly.

Martin listened to that weird grief all a-prickle with shivery sensations. It was unnerving.

Nor were his companions indifferent to the sound. The four sailors huddled quickly together and gazed fearfully into the dark opening.

Moto chopped off short the word he was saying, and Martin saw his body stiffen and his eyes dilate. Even Ichi betrayed agitation, and Martin saw a violent but quickly mastered emotion flit across his yellow features.

The eery wail died quite away, and Martin's scalp stopped crawling. Ichi turned to him with a somewhat shaken smile; Martin saw that the Japanese gentleman's nostrils were twitching nervously, and that his voluble speech was really an effort to regain composure.

"Have no afraid. The sound of much strangeness is from the cave of the wind," said Ichi. "It is from the deep place. Now will come the shake, perhaps."

The shake came on the tail of Ichi's words. A heavy, ominous rumbling came out of the black depths. Martin recalled hearing the same sound the day before, when he was on the topgallant-yard. And suddenly the hard, packed sand began to crawl beneath his feet, things swayed dizzily before his eyes, and a sharp nausea attacked the pit of his stomach.

It was but a baby temblor, and it lasted but an instant.

Martin was not much disturbed—a lifetime in San Francisco had made quakes a commonplace experience—but he had the sudden thought that there were safer journeys in the world than the one he was about to take into the heart of a half-extinct volcano. Not that the probable danger of the trip impressed him sharply—he was too much occupied with his plight, and desperate plan—but it was evident the Japs did not relish the undertaking.

The four sailors and Moto were plainly terrified, and, as the trembling and rumbling ceased, they exclaimed with awe and fear. Ichi held himself in hand, but his mouth sagged.

"Always comes the strange noise, and then the shake," he said to Martin. There was the hint of a quaver in his voice. "Out of the deep place, they come—like the strugglés of Evil Ones!"

He broke off to speak sharply to his men, bracing them with words.

"They are of much ignorance," he continued to Martin. "They have much fear. They know a silly story their mothers have told them, about the Evil Ones calling from the deep pit; it is a—what you say?—a folk story of the Japanese. These men are of ignorance. But we gentlemen know it is of absurdness, and most untrue. It is a story of great unscientificness."

Ichi rolled the last word off his tongue with difficult triumph. "Unscientificness," was evidently the club his Western education gave him, with which to combat the inbred superstition of centuries. But Martin saw it was a straw club.

But if Ichi were frightened, he mastered his fear.

"It will, perhaps, be some time till the next shake," he told Martin. "We must haste. You shall follow me, please? And recall, as we walk, that Moto is but a pace behind you, and in fine readiness."

He chattered peremptory words to his followers. One of the sailors picked up a lantern, Moto stepped behind Martin, and Ichi lifted the other lantern and stepped toward the cave mouth.

"You might look well at the sky, dear Mr. Blake," he leered over his shoulder at

Martin. "Who may say when you will see it again?"

But Martin was in no mood to be frightened. Indeed, if he had put his hot thoughts into words, he would have replied to the sinister hint by inviting Ichi to take *his* last look at daylight. He did look at the sky, but it was for another purpose than bidding farewell to sunlight. He brought his gaze down to the waters of the bay.

The *Cohasset* was quiet, lying peacefully on the easy water. Figures on her deck were plainly visible. Martin saw the bow-legged lieutenant standing on the poop, staring at the group on the beach. He saw more.

The tide had swung the vessel around during the past few moments. She now lay broadside on to the beach. From a cabin port, he saw a bit of fluttering white. A lump rose in his throat. It was Ruth, he knew, waving him good-by. Dear Ruth! Yes, it was farewell! Farewell to life, perhaps, and to love, to this wonderful love that made him almost happy in his misery. The thought of his sweetheart cooped up in that little room with the stricken blind man, with only her resourceful wit and high courage to combat the leaguering terrors, steeled his resolve. He would play his part, he vowed to himself, no matter what the price he payed. God grant that his shipmates be enabled to play their part!

"Ah—we wait, Mr. Blake!" came Ichi's voice, and he was suddenly conscious that Moto's hand was pressing his shoulder.

Ichi was already inside, lantern held high. As Martin stepped for the opening, he cast a swift, sidelong glance down the beach, toward the big-mouthed cave. He saw nothing—which was what he expected.

"I must have been mistaken," he thought. "It must have been a trick of imagination."

He brushed past the man who had the watch-tackle coiled over a shoulder, and fell in behind Ichi. The last sound he heard from the outer world was the clear, vibrant sound of the ship's bell. Five bells!

CHAPTER XIX

ON THE EDGE OF THE ABYSS

DURING the passage, Martin had listened to many discussions between Little Billy and Captain Dabney concerning Fire Mountain, and their descriptions of the strange features of the place had given him a burning impatience to reach the spot and see the grotesque sculptures on the mountain face and explore the mysterious caverns.

Billy and the captain had debated the geology of the mountain and had agreed upon this theory: That in some past age the volcano had erupted in the heart of an Arctic Winter; that the flowing lava had been quickly chilled by the intense cold, and in hardening had formed the odd shapes and numberless caves.

The cloak of black lava that covered the mountain could not be very thick, argued the captain, and it would be found that, though the caves existed all the way around the mountain, from base to summit, none of them penetrated into the volcano itself.

Little Billy cited John Winters' log in disproof, and he and Martin made plans to thoroughly explore the island. Martin was charmed by the promised adventure. His imagination rioted; he craved the moment when he would land on Fire Mountain beach and enter the gloomy depths through the portal of the Elephant Head on his errand of discovery.

Reality was different from the bright dreams! Here he was, at last, on the very beach, stepping through the very opening—and, instead of friendly company, he was surrounded by alien, hostile faces; instead of Ruth's soft hand snuggling confidingly in his, his arms were bound behind him; instead of inspecting his path with a carefree, curious gaze, he looked out of eyes of desperation.

He was hardly interested in discovery, as he stepped through the Elephant Head; the details of the appearance of the caves were impressed sharply upon his mind, but they were subconscious impressions. He was thinking at the moment of his arms. They ached cruelly. Would they fail him? Would he be unable to use them, when he jerked them free? Would they drop lifeless to his sides, after their long confinement in one position? No; he could wriggle his fingers easily. They were not numbed.

Ichi walked first, then Martin, the grim Moto next, and the four sailors trailed behind, the last man carrying the second lantern.

The gallery they traversed was but a deep fissure in the black rock, of uneven height and width. The walls would narrow

till they had almost to squeeze through, and widen till the lantern failed to reveal them. At times Martin had to bend his head to proceed; again, the roof was lost in the gloom.

After a few paces, the sand underfoot gave way abruptly to a floor of the hard, smooth lava. The gallery angled a few degrees, and the thin shaft of daylight that came through the entrance disappeared. The way sloped gently upward.

Martin towered a full head above Ichi—as he did above any of his squat guards, save Moto, who was extraordinarily large for his race—and he could look over Ichi's head and see their path revealed by the lantern light.

The lantern waged but a feeble battle against the dense blackness. Martin had the strange sense of being crushed by the enveloping gloom. Their footfalls clacked echoingly upon the rock, which was glass-like and slippery.

Martin was sensible of a sharp rise of temperature, as soon as the daylight was left behind. There was a strong draft in the passageway, and the hot, smelly air blew in his face and ruffled the hair on his bare head. He was also conscious of the low, steady, moaning sound that came out of the heart of the darkness ahead of him.

The gallery wound about. Martin had almost lost sense of direction, but he thought they must have gone at least seventy-five yards into the mountain. They passed a dark opening, but it was on the left hand.

The whaleman's directions were in his mind: "4 starboard—windy cave." That must mean that the fourth opening on the right hand led to the windy cave. Cave of winds! That was where the "deep place" was located, said Ichi. That was where that horrible sound came from!

The thought of John Winters' companion, the conscience-stricken Silva, occurred to Martin. The "deep place" must be Winters' "bottomless hole," the weird moaning must be the Voice that called Silva to his doom.

They passed a cave opening on the right hand, another, and another. The hot wind blew more strongly; it was a moisture-laden breeze, and Martin's clothes were damp. The passage suddenly angled obliquely. A few steps further, and Ichi stopped. Martin saw in front of him the yawning mouth of the cave of winds.

It was a large opening, and the agitated air rushed out as if expelled by a giant fan, and it smelled and tasted evilly of sulfur and sour gas. The strange moaning came with the rushing air; it seemed to come from below, from an immeasurable distance.

The group clustered together at the cave entrance. The two lanterns, held high, beat back the inky blackness for a few feet.

Martin stared into the cave of the winds. It was a huge cavern, he knew, though its dimensions were hidden beyond the light.

Ichi was jabbering Japanese at his men, almost shouting in order to be intelligible above the rhythmic moan of the dark depths that beat about their ears, and his words echoed, and re-echoed, and died away in the distant recesses of the cave.

But it was not the length or breadth of the windy cave that fastened Martin's startled regard. It was the depth. For there, at his very feet almost, plain in the lantern light, was the "deep place" of Ichi's reference, the "bottomless hole" of Winters' log. It was a crack in the floor, its width and length lost in the gloom. Its edge was but a foot or two inside the cavern entrance. It was out of that half revealed, gaping slit that the wind came rushing, it was from somewhere in those black depths, down, down, a fathomless distance, that the wild wailing came.

The lanterns revealed white vapors swirling upward out of the hole. The surroundings were wet. Water dripped down Martin's neck, from overhead. The black rock was glistening wet. It was wet underfoot and as slippery as a waxed floor. His clothes were dampened through.

The four sailors had huddled fearfully together, peering into the chasm. Ichi's orders drove them to action. The man who carried the rope tackle slipped it from his shoulder. With the aid of another man, he overhauled it to the full length of the hauling part. Martin had supposed that the tackle was for possible use in recovering the ambergris, but now he saw Ichi had brought it along for another purpose. This was not Ichi's first trip to the cave of winds, and he came forearmed.

The opening before which they clustered was at the left wall of the windy cave. There was a floor along the wall, Martin saw—a ledge about six feet wide that extended from the wall to the edge of the pit. It sloped, and it was wet and shining, and,

Martin could see, a most treacherous footing. The words of the code were—"windy cave—2 port—aloft," so he knew they must travel that dangerous path till they reached the second opening in the wall.

It was here, he saw, that the watch-tackle came into play. Overhauled, the man who carried the second lantern took the head-block in his free hand and stepped through the entrance and onto the slippery ledge. He sidled along, close to the wall, holding the light high and dragging the rope behind him.

Martin saw the first opening in the left hand wall but a few feet inside, as the fellow crept past it. He traveled about thirty feet, then lantern and man melted into the wall, and Martin knew the second opening was reached. In a second, man and lantern reappeared, and the fellow sang out.

The fellow by Martin's side, who held the foot-block of the tackle, fastened the hook on a little raised ledge of rock on the side of the entrance. Then he grasped the hauling line, and pulled the tackle taut. There, along the wall of the dangerous ledge, stretched a life-line, waist high.

The sailor took a turn about his body with the bight of the rope and held a steady strain upon the line, keeping the tackle taut. Martin saw why they had fetched a tackle, and not a length of rope—there were no jutting rocks about which a rope might be knotted, but the hooks of the blocks fitted easily over the small inequalities the edges of the openings presented. So long as a strain was kept upon the hauling line, the hooks would bite.

Martin followed the stretching of the life-line with a watchful eye. He was watching for a chance to put his plan in execution; he was waiting for that careless moment on his guard's part, when he could free his hands.

This was the time and place! He would fling himself upon Ichi and endeavor to obtain possession of the only firearm in the crowd. If he obtained the revolver, he reasoned, he might be able to hold the gang at bay, prevent them returning to the ship until after the boatswain had pulled his surprise. Or, if he failed in that, he could surely kill some of them before their sharp knives finished him.

Such was Martin's plan. He dismissed the thought of attempting to escape—of losing himself in the black caves. It was his part to fight, he reasoned, not to run away.

He knew his death was almost certain. If he fought he would be killed; if he did not fight, Ichi would probably murder him so soon as the ambergris was discovered; if it were not discovered, Moto would torture him. But Martin's fear of death was overshadowed by his fear for Ruth. His fate was nothing—but hers! So he prepared his mind and watched his guard with crafty eye.

But the opportune moment was not arrived. Moto's eyes were fixed upon him unwaveringly. Ichi, too, was on the alert, supervising the bustling sailors.

Martin accorded the little yellow devils an unwilling admiration. They were plainly terrified by their surroundings, especially by the gruesome sounds that came from the "deep place," yet their native hardihood, or, perhaps, the iron discipline Carew probably held them to, caused them to ignore their superstitious fears and yield Ichi unquestioning obedience.

Ichi, too, was patently afraid, to Martin's sharp gaze. "Scientificness," and "Fate," were proving weak consolers in the face of inherited fears. The wailing of the "Evil Ones" down below plainly rasped Ichi's nerves. But Ichi held his disquiet firmly in check, and his voice was sure as he gave his orders. He also forced a modicum of approval from Martin. Martin knew the poisonous little wretch was a foul murderer, but that he was courageous, and his courage was not mere physical bravado, either.

Ichi set his lantern down beside the man who was holding the line. Then he looked at Martin. He did not attempt to speak—he motioned. He pointed to the chasm and leered wickedly at Martin; then he pointed to the man holding the light at the other end of the life-line and indicated they were to cross. Then he turned and essayed the slippery passage, one steadying hand on the rope.

Martin hesitated for the fraction of a second.

"What if they shove me over?" he thought.

His hands were useless—he could not make use of that saving line. If Moto, behind him, should give him but the slightest push, over the edge, into that dreadful hole he would go. But the instant's reflection reassured him. He was safe until the

ambergris was discovered. By that time his opportunity to act would have arrived.

He followed in Ichi's wake. His nerve was steady; although the comforting touch of the life-line was not for him, he stepped out firmly on the glassy, inclined way. The ticklish passage was not more than a score of careful steps. An arm's length ahead of him was Ichi, behind him, he knew, followed Moto and the two sailors.

Ichi minced his steps, compelling Martin to shorten his stride. Martin saw the Japanese gentleman liked not the path—he grasped the rope tightly and peered fearfully into the abyss.

Martin had the thought: Why not throw himself upon Ichi and roll with him over the edge? But the thought was dismissed as soon as entertained. Ichi's elimination would not help his shipmates; indeed, it would harm them, for the rest would scurry back to the ship. Then Ichi reached the lantern and stepped to the left, beyond reach. Martin followed and found himself again on the level floor, in the entrance to another cave.

This entrance was not wide, and there was room for but four, huddled together—the sailor who had strung the line, Ichi, Martin, and Moto. The two sailors stayed on the sloping ledge, grasping the tackle. The remaining man held to his position at the far end of the tackle, the rope wrapped about him.

Martin stared into this new chamber. Like the cave of winds, the place's dimensions were hidden by the darkness, which the lantern rays pushed back for but a few feet. But the place did not feel as spacious as the windy cave, and a foot above his head was the black and glistening ceiling. "2 port—aloft—north corner dry cave," ran the code. This was 2 port, but the cave was wet and dripping like the windy cave.

"Ah—it is here that we commence our looking!" exclaimed Ichi. "We have already searched this cavern, but not 'aloft.' So now we gaze with upwardness and test the statements of the young female and your honorable self, Mr. Blake. Are you of sureness as to the words? Ah, the worthy Moto is of readiness!"

"The code says 'aloft,' " answered Martin. "Look for a hole in the roof, leading up to a dry cave."

Martin felt Moto's fingers resting lightly upon his shoulder. But he also felt the hard outline of the gun in Ichi's coat pocket, against his leg. They were crowded closely together in the cave entrance. Now, he thought, was his chance!

Cautiously, so Moto would not feel and interpret the movement, he commenced to squeeze his right hand free from the loose handcuff.

Ichi chattered an order and the sailor picked up the lantern and held it over his head. The overhead rock was revealed for quite an area. Martin's first glance was toward the very spot they sought—just to the left of the entrance, and on a level with his chin, a shelf of rock jutted for a foot from the wall. Above it was an opening, a crack in the ceiling, hardly large enough, he judged, to admit his body. The others saw the opening also.

Ichi pointed and cried out excitedly. The lantern light shone on his upturned face, and Martin saw his features contorted with triumphant greed.

Martin glanced at Moto. He, also, had his eyes upon the opening. The careless moment had come! Martin, with a slight, convulsive jerk, freed his right hand of the cuff.

Then, before he could straighten his arm Ichi turned and grinned up into his face.

"Ah—so, it was with truthfulness you spoke! We have, then, perhaps, no further needfulness——"

So far he got, and then he stiffened, his mouth sagged, cruelty and cupidity left his eyes and terror crept in.

The cause lay in the depths of the chasm behind them. For the Voice of the Pit had suddenly increased in volume; in a second it had become an appalling roar, and a very gale of heated air smote their backs, as it gushed forth from the depths.

The group in the cave entrance were held motionless for an instant. The terrifying roaring was growing; it seemed to be a tangible thing that was approaching them.

Martin's ear-drums were ringing. But the intensity of his feeling armored him against fear. Ruth! His plan! This was the moment he had awaited; this was his chance!

"Now!" he thought exultantly.

The sailor threw his lantern down, and then flung himself down beside it, burying his face in his arms in an abandon of fright. Moto was staring, wide-eyed, into the pit. Martin suddenly reached out and gathered the transfixed Ichi into his arms.

He had rehearsed in mind his movements. He pressed the Jap to him with his left arm, from the wrist of which the irons still dangled, while his right hand dove for Ichi's pocket. His fingers closed about the butt of the revolver, and he jerked it out.

Ichi struggled furiously, awake to danger at the first touch, but he was a child in Martin's bear-like hug. He screamed at the fascinated Moto. Martin saw his lips move, but not a syllable sounded above the mighty roaring that filled the caverns. Then Ichi bent his head and sunk his teeth in Martin's forearm till they met.

Martin had the gun. The sharp pain of the bite thrilled him. He hurled Ichi violently from him and raised the weapon, ready to shoot. Ichi spun around, from the power of the thrust Martin had given. He crashed heavily against the frozen Moto, clutched him, and the feet of both men lost hold on the slippery underfooting. They fell together.

They fell off the level surface of the floor at the cave entrance, upon the incline that sloped to the chasm edge. Their momentum carried them on. They slid down the six foot slope, clutching wildly at the wet, glass-like surface of the ledge.

They seemed to hang motionless for a second at the edge. Their faces were lifted to Martin; their mouths were wide open with horrid, soundless screams; their frenzied faces, half seen in the gloom, haloed by wreathing white vapors.

Then they were gone.

FOR a moment Martin stood rooted by horror. The tragedy had happened so quickly he was still in the posture his violent effort in hurling Ichi from him had induced—half crouched, revolver leveled, eyes strained upon the spot where the two men had disappeared. Unconsciously, his ears tried to catch the screams of the falling men. But the thunder that ascended from that fathomless well killed all sound—it seemed to rock the world, to shake the soul free from his body.

He felt violently sick, and his knees sagged. He sat down beside the terrified sailor, his wide eyes still fixed upon the dancing rim of the chasm. In his mind's eye he could see the pair falling, down, down, past black, slippery walls, into the dark heart of that tremendous sound. But he was too stupefied by the awful noise to feel either glad or sorry.

He thought, "This is death!" Then, instantly, his mind asked, "Why the sound? What is it?" The white vapor was pouring out of the chasm—it seemed to make the windy cave less dark. It swirled about him; the hot air rushed past him. He was half choking, and sopping wet. The noise was like a thousand boilers blowing off.

Steam! He had it! It was the roar of escaping steam, far down in that fearful hole. The vapors, the hot, wet wind—it was the dead steam, half condensed during its long rush upward!

The intelligence came to Martin with a flash, though his dulled mind did not consciously reason about it. But he knew that deep down in the bowels of the mountain the sea seepage was turned to steam. The live heart of the volcano was a tremendous boiler, and the chasm was that boiler's giant safety-valve. At intervals, when the pressure rose to some unknown, unguessed height, the generated steam burst its way to freedom.

But Martin was not thinking primarily of steam. As much as he could muster his thought in that wild din, he thought of the two men falling. He wondered how far ere they reached the bottom. He had a dim conception now of the depth of the chasm—it was so deep that the steam had lost its biting power ere it reached the surface.

He wondered how far a man must fall ere he lost consciousness. God! He had planned their death; he had planned to fight and kill; but such a death!

He became conscious that the shattering roar had reached its greatest pitch, and was diminishing. He had lost track of time; he felt he had always been sitting beside the groveling sailor, deafened by noise. But now, the pressure on his ear-drums was lessening, the humming inside his head was gone, and clear thought was returning to him. The stunned apathy was leaving him.

He observed the others. The man by his side hugged the ground and hid his face. On the sloping ledge, along the wall of the windy cave, the two sailors still clung to the life-line. The tackle stretched along the wall, from entrance edge to entrance edge, and there was nothing but air between the two and the chasm. They clutched the ropes tightly and stared fixedly down that black mouth.

Martin could not see their faces, but their postures were eloquent of utter fear. The sight of them still stationary on the dangerous shelf, gave Martin an ideal of the briefness of the time since the great noise commenced. He realized that but a moment had passed since Ichi and Moto fell to their death.

By the light from the lantern at his feet, Martin could see quite plainly the remaining Jap, standing in the entrance to the windy cave. The fellow's face was stony with terror—but he still grasped the hauling part of the tackle, leaning backward and holding the saving strain on the rope. Upon him depended the lives of the other two; saw Martin. If he should slacken that rope . . .

The roaring was gone. It died away to the whistling, rhythmic wail that had preceded the outburst—it was in itself a roar but it seemed thin as a babe's cry by comparison.

"Now, the shake!" thought Martin, with memory of Ichi's words and of what had occurred while they were on the beach.

There commenced another great noise. It was not like the shattering, nerve-wracking roar of the steam. It was rather a mighty rumble that came from an immense distance. The mountain shook; not violently, but shudderingly, as if the Atlas, far beneath, were hunching his shoulders.

Coincidentally with the shaking, appeared light. It appeared hovering over the gaping crack, the dim reflection of a far distant glare, in color a pale green. Slowly it spread, diffusing a soft radiance and revealing, to Martin's fascinated gaze, the vast dimensions of the cave of the winds lighted by the weird glow.

Something forced Martin's gaze to the other entrance. And as his eyes rested upon the figure of the rope-holding Jap, his body stiffened convulsively, and his mouth flew open, with the shock of great surprise. His heart skipped a beat, and then commenced to race furiously, while cold chills of terror crawled down his back.

For suddenly, materialized beside the Jap, was another figure. The unholy light painted him with its unearthly, greenish hue. His haggard face and gleaming eyes, his humped body, its croodkeness intensified by his attitude, the ghastly light, all combined to make him horrible, unhuman. He was a wraith, an "Evil One" from the "Deep Place," come floating up from the depths with that wicked glow.

Martin was gabbling, striving to cry out. Good God! It was true then! That face in the cave—it was no hallucination. Heavens, was it man—or ghost! . . . The apparition crouched, as if about to leap. A bared knife was visible in his hand, and he stared fixedly at the living anchor of the life-line.

Slowly, the yellow sailor sensed the fearsome presence by his side. He did not move his head, but slowly rolled his eyes and looked at the ghostly and menacing visitor. Slowly, the stony expression of his face was overshadowed by a look of complete horror and despair.

For a second, perhaps, he remained motionless. Then his surrender to terror was completed. He leaped as if released by a spring, threw from him the life-saving rope, flung up his hands before his face, and backed away from the figure. He backed into the windy cave.

They were gone in another second, the three of them, ere Martin could utter his cry of horror, before the stranger could move. For, when the sailor dropped the line, the strain on the tackle was released. The freed line whipped snakelike through the air, as it overhauled through the blocks. The two men clutching the bight fell backward and slid down the fatal incline; the blocks, with no weight to hold them in position, dropped from the rock, and the tackle was swept after the two.

The tail-block, swishing over the smooth surface, twined around the feet of the backward-stumbling first man and jerked him down. With the swift waning, livid light revealing a writhing jumble of outflung arms and legs, the three slipped over the chasm edge, dragging the tackle with them.

The quake rumble had ceased. Above the simmering moan of the steam, Martin heard the trio's death cry, a wild, hideous shriek that grew fainter and fainter, farther away, and merged into the other sound.

The greenish light sank into the depths. The darkness swept down again meeting only the burning lanterns. And Martin saw by the side of the fear-crazed survivor of Ichi's band, in the entrance to the inner cave, himself sick and shaken. While, by the lantern in the other entrance, stood Little Billy.

CHAPTER XX

THE NOTE

A LONG moment dragged by, while the two men stared at each other's forms. Martin was tongue-tied. He was overwhelmed by the multiplied tragedies of the past few moments, and still a bit stupid from the battering his eardrums had experienced during the great noise. For the moment he could not grasp the fact that the hunchback was actually standing there opposite him.

"It is Little Billy!" ran his mind. "No, it can not be. Little Billy is on board, directing Yip and the bosun." The guess, born of hope, he had made, that Little Billy was at large on the ship, combated the evidence of his eyesight.

The sailor lying on his face by Martin's side, was breathing heavily. Suddenly, his groveling form was shaken by convulsive shudders, and his trembling hand rapped against Martin's knee. That trifling contact was the shock that enlivened Martin and broke the spell of inaction. The words that were clogging his throat exploded in a hoarse shout:

"Billy! Billy! You?"

Almost in the same instant, Little Billy came to life, and his voice mingled with Martin's:

"Martin! Yes, yes—are you all right, Martin?"

Martin got to his feet, impelled by the thought of joining the other. But Little Billy moved first—he stepped out upon the ledge and commenced to sidle toward Martin.

Martin was still a-tingle with horror of the swift fate which had overtaken Ichi and his men, and he watched the other's approach with an unnerving fear that Billy would make a misstep. When Little Billy drew near, he reached out and grasped his arm and drew him to safe footing by his side. And then he pawed the hunchback fiercely, and with intense relief. It was Billy! Real flesh-and-blood Billy!

"Oh, Billy!" he cried. "How did you? I thought——"

The hunchback interrupted with a wildly anxious outburst of his own.

"Ruth! Oh, God, Martin—Ruth! The captain! The ship! Ruth!"

In his excitement, Little Billy gabbled even more incoherently than Martin.

Billy's despair-tinged exclamations acted with bracing effect upon Martin's shaken wits. He pulled himself together.

"Yes, yes, Billy, they have not harmed Ruth. Carew has the ship. But there is a plan!"

He stopped. The plan! Good Lord! What now of the plan? He had taken it for granted that Little Billy was on the ship, in a position to let the boatswain know of the departure of the shore party and ready to direct the onslaught of his shipmates. But Little Billy was here, before him. What now?

Little Billy stepped upon the sailor's prostrate body. He exclaimed, startled, and clutched Martin's arm.

"Who is it?" cried he. "One of them—dead?"

"Fright. That noise—the hole—they believe it is spirits," answered Martin. "Flung himself down, frightened, not dead."

But even as he spoke, staring down at the huddled figure, he had the uneasy feeling that his words were short of the truth. For there was something strange about that heap at his feet. The man seemed to have shrunk in his clothes. He was very still; the stertorous breathing had ceased, and the body no longer shook with that rending fear.

Martin was conscious of a chilled prickling along his spine, as he looked down. And even before Little Billy bent over and pulled the bulk over on its back, he sensed the truth.

"Fright, hey? Looks it! It finished him!" commented Little Billy.

Martin stared at the upturned, yellow face. The slant eyes were wide open, glassy, unseeing, the lips drew back snarling from the clenched teeth, the whole face was stamped with a terrifying fear. The man was dead, slain by terror. As he looked down at the contorted features, Martin was touched to a sudden dread, himself, by the icy finger of the yellow men's deadly superstition.

He wrenched his eyes away from that fear-stricken lump and glanced about him with a sharp disquiet. The dense, encroaching darkness of the vast caverns was a sinister background for panicky thoughts. Before him gaped that frightful gash in the floor, and the steam vapors, dimly seen, curled upward and vanished in the gloom, wreathing into pale and ghostly shapes.

The two lanterns, lighting the cave openings, revealed but the fringe of the place. What fear-some Presence lurked behind that somber curtain? Had that dead sailor seen something—something that shocked the life out of him, that froze that awful look upon his face? Had he beheld the malignant Jinn of this black hole; had the Evil Ones ascended from the Deep Place to claim his life? Dead—he was the last! The others—down there, whence came that furious moaning! Dead—six of them, who but now were pulsing with life—all dead, five of them vanished utterly! His lawless, greed-ridden enemies were gone. Ay, he had, with the aid of swift and merciless Fate, accomplished his work. The six would not return to the ship.

Martin wondered what Ichi thought of Fate now. Six men—in a twinkling. Six! Ten moments ago he had been their prisoner, fearing for his life. Ten moments! How long since he had crept behind Ichi, across that narrow ledge? Ten moments—ay, ten hours, ten lifetimes!

He wheeled upon Little Billy.

"Come! Let us get out of here, quick!" he exclaimed.

"Which way? The cave — you found Winters' cave?" answered Little Billy.

Martin nodded. The dry cave; that was it! He did not relish recrossing the ledge at that moment, and also, Winters' description of the dry cave occurred to him. They should be able to look out over the bay from the dry cave. They might find the ambergris, the nearly forgotten cause of all this misery and death.

"Yes—up there!" he directed, and pointed to the opening overhead.

He leaned over to pick up the lantern. Then he suddenly discovered that he was still holding Ichi's revolver in his right hand, and that the handcuffs were still dangling from his left wrist.

The intelligence steadied him. The irons and the gun were real things; and the sight of them brought his mind sharply back to normal, and banished the besieging terrors his imagination had created.

"The gun—where did you get the gun? How did you get out of the irons?"

"Ichi's gun," said Martin laconically.

He pocketed it. Then, he slipped the hateful irons off his wrist and threw them over his shoulder. They clinked on the rock floor and bounced over the edge of the chasm. Then he overcame his repugnance and knelt by the dead sailor's side. He was reasoning that more weapons would not come amiss. He unloosened the man's belt, which contained a sheath-knife, and belted it about his own middle.

"All right—come!" he said, rising, lantern in hand.

They stepped over the inanimate heap and inspected, by the upheld lantern, the hole in the roof. It was large enough to admit them, and the draft bespoke a passage of length. It was easily accessible to Martin, but the hunchback was too short to be able to grasp the projecting ledge and boost himself up.

So Martin, with the memory of that San Francisco night, backed against the wall. And a second later Billy was standing on his shoulders, and Martin was made aware that his companion's feet were shoeless.

Little Billy swarmed upward through the opening. An instant later he called:

"All right. It's a passage, I think."

Martin handed up the lantern, grasped the ledge of rock, and himself struggled up through the hole.

WHEN Martin gained Little Billy's side, he discovered himself to be standing at the beginning of a tunnel. The lantern showed a split in the rock, of much the same irregular shape as the one by which he had entered the mountain. The air was sweet, and, as he peered into the darkness ahead, a cool draft touched his face. So, he knew the gloomy corridor led to blessed daylight.

"Come on!" he exclaimed to Little Billy, and set off at a reckless stride.

For some distance the way shelved upward and then leveled. The tunnel twisted in the same fashion as the one below, but the hot, wet wind from the chasm had been left behind, and the smooth rock was dry.

Martin plunged and scrambled ahead. Little Billy, at his heels, was babbling questions, but Martin would not pause to answer. His one thought was to get out of the darkness, to gain the dry cave and the opening overlooking the bay, that the whaleman had written of. Then, he could see the ship—could see . . .

Martin was not consciously reasoning the length of time he had been in the mountain, but he felt that hours had passed since he left the ship. Surely, the boatswain had

made his attempt ere this. Perhaps he would see the boatswain and Ruth in charge.

The way angled, and ahead of him was a distant patch of daylight. At the same instant he was conscious that he no longer traversed a tunnel, but a wide and lofty cavern. With the hunchback's stockinged feet pattering noiselessly behind him, he rushed toward the opening, careless of possible chasms in his path.

A moment later the two stood in the opening and overlooked the sun-sparkled waters, and the vessel lying anchored a few hundred yards distant. They looked down upon her, and her decks were plainly revealed.

At the first glance, Martin suffered the sharpest stab of disappointment he had ever felt. For, lounging over the taffrail and staring beachward, was the bow-legged Japanese mate, in the exact attitude Martin had seen him in as he entered the caves in Ichi's wake. The man seemed not to have moved.

The Japs still had her. The armed guards at the hatches were plainly visible. Then Ruth was still in Carew's hands! Had the boatswain failed? Martin groaned aloud in despair, and his groan was changed to a gasp of astonishment.

For the man, Asoki, suddenly left the rail, walked to the companion hatch, glanced in, and then continued aft and struck the time on the bell that hung by the wheel. Six bells!

"Six bells!" cried Martin. "Why—it was five bells when he came ashore! Has it only been a half hour?"

It was unbelievable. Only thirty moments since he followed Ichi through the Elephant Head? That dark journey into the depths of the mountain, the terrors of the earth's convulsion, the swift tragedies by the edge of the black abyss, all combined to lend error to his time reckoning. He felt as if he had been immersed in blackness for hours; but now that he reasoned about it, he realized how short was the time spent in the cave of the winds. But a half-hour! Why, then it was probable the boatswain and the lads had not yet made their attempt. No, surely not; for there stepped Charley Bo Yip out of the galley, and Yip was in the plot. The plot—the note!

"Great Scott!" exclaimed Martin.

"What is it?" demanded Little Billy.

The hunchback had been talking steadily to Martin's deaf ears. Now he grasped the front of Martin's shirt and attempted to shake the larger man into attention.

"Look here, Martin, what is it? Talk to me! How are things on the ship? Remember, I don't know. The crew—have they killed the hands? The captain—bosun——"

Martin was fumbling in his hip pocket, his fingers closing upon a folded piece of paper.

"Crew's shut in hold — except three dead," he stated briefly. "Bosun with them. Yip is cooking for Japs—gave me note—here!"

He had the paper spread open, and he and Little Billy stared at the scrawled message:

MARTIN, DEER SIR,

Have joined the hands and hiding out and chips will slip this to the chink who is a good scout and the lass has give him some fissuk from the medersin chest and he will put it in the soup for diner and when the Japs all got the beleyake we come up when he knocks on hatch.

Respectfully yours,
THOS. J. HENRY.

Their eyes met above the scrap of paper, Martin's kindled with understanding, Little Billy's bewildered.

"By George, the bosun!" exclaimed Martin. "He wrote it—it wasn't you at all, Billy! It is Ruth, and the fellows in the hold, with the Chinaman as go-between. And I thought all the time it was you."

He paused, and his eyes commenced to inspect his companion critically, realizing, as he did so, that Little Billy's presence ashore was an unexplained mystery. The hunchback stood revealed as a truly pitiful figure, by the daylight that gushed through the opening in the cavern wall. Martin was already aware that Little Billy was shoeless; now he observed he was minus coat and overshirt as well.

The twisted, meager frame was clad only in sea-soiled trousers and singlet. The face was haggard, the eyes were deeply sunken and distraught with fatigue and worry, and upon his forehead was a wicked bruise. It was apparent that Little Billy had passed through some strenuous experience.

"How had he escaped the yellow pirates?" was Martin's thought; and he plumped the question at the other. "What happened to you? How did you get ashore?"

"Swam," was the succinct reply. "But never mind me now. I'll tell you afterward. Just now, you talk. What happened

to you? What are conditions aboard? Why did they bring you ashore? The bosun—that note! What is it—a scheme to retake the ship?"

"Yes," answered Martin. "Here it is in a word, as I understand it now: The fo'-c's'le crowd is locked in the hold, with armed guards at the hatches. The bosun has broken through from the lazaret and joined them. The captain is laid up in his bunk, from the blow Carew gave him, and Ruth is attending him. She has probably had access to the medicine-chest. Yip is at large, attending to his cooking—they evidently didn't consider it worth while to lock him up; they think him harmless, no account. But he is with us. Ruth has given him some stuff from the medicine-chest. By George! No wonder Yip was so eager to place a chair for her; that's when he got it! And he's going to dope the grub, and then signal the lads below. He has already been in communication with them — probably carried them grub; and he obtained this note the bosun wrote, and slipped it to me. I thought it was from you, Billy. I knew you were alive, and was sure you were hidden on the ship, and coaching Yip. Didn't have a chance to read it."

The hunchback took the note from Martin's hand and reread it.

"Dope in the grub!" he mused. "I wonder—oh, but say, Martin, they won't eat until after eight bells! Can't we get on board and help? That whale-boat down there——"

"No. We mustn't show ourselves," returned Martin promptly. "Don't you see—if we show ourselves on the beach, they'll not only knock us over with the rifles, but Carew will know that something has happened to Ichi. Now, he thinks Ichi is searching the caves for the ambergris. There are only nine of them left—and ten of our fellows in the hold. We mustn't do anything to make them anxious or suspicious. It would kill the chance for a surprise."

Little Billy nodded approval.

"I see," he said contritely. "I'm dopey, Martin; can't think straight. Nerves snapping. I've worried a deal since last night. You know how it is. I didn't know what had happened, and Ruth——"

Martin knew how it was. He smiled his understanding and sympathy. He knew. His own nerves were snapping, and Ruth was the cause. Oh, he knew! His, and Wild Bob Carew's, were not the only hearts enslaved by the maid of the *Cohasset!* Martin, the accepted lover, could regard without disquiet the love shining in Little Billy's anxious eyes.

"I know how it is between you and Ruth," continued Little Billy. "So, you understand how I feel. I'd—I'd die for her gladly, Martin!"

Martin silently held out his hand, and the stanch-hearted cripple gave it a vigorous squeeze. For a moment their hearts were too filled for them to speak.

Then Little Billy broke out again.

"Let us sit down and rest, while we wait for this show to begin. Tell me just what happened to you, Martin, last night. Then I'll be better able to size up the situation, and plan. You know, we'll have to act if the bosun's attempt fails. Afterward, I'll tell you what happened to me—it was an accident."

He threw himself down upon the cave floor, and stared out through the opening. Then, with a touch of his old gaiety, he added—

"Well, we have box seats, anyway."

CHAPTER XXI

A MILLION IN KEGS

IT WAS a box seat. Martin, as he sat down, was forced to admit the aptness of the remark. The opening they gazed through was a very window in the rock, and the beach, the bay, and the sea beyond stretched away before them.

The cave they were in was fully two score feet above the beach level. There was a sheer drop below to the sand, and they did not have a rope to make a ladder with, as had the whaleman. Martin saw that they would have to leave the dry cave the way they had entered, unless a search revealed some unsuspected outlet fashioned by time and quake since Winters' sojourn here.

But he was in no mind to search at that moment. He wanted to keep his eyes upon the ship. He gave not a passing thought to the ambergris, which he knew must be somewhere near to hand.

The whale-boat, he saw, had been left high and dry upon the sand by the ebbing tide. But the tide was on the turn. The ship was swinging stern on to the beach.

He worried at the thought the rising tide might float the whale-boat away ere the great moment. Such an event would rouse the Japs to investigation, he knew. But a word to Little Billy reassured him.

"Take over an hour," said Billy.

An hour! It would surely be decided, for good or ill, within an hour, Martin thought. He wondered what the stuff was that Yip would put in the soup.

They had a clear view of the decks from their perch. He counted the number of men visible. Seven, including the watching Asoki, on the poop. Two were in the cabin, he believed—Carew, who had been preparing to sleep, and the guard stationed before the captain's door.

Martin was pleased. He reasoned that the seven men on deck would all partake of the drugged food within a short time of each other. Three would eat, he thought, and then the four guards at the hatches would be relieved, and they would immediately gobble their food and, with luck, the presence of the drug would not be detected until all were finished. What was the "fissuk?" Would they be helpless? Would they drop those cursed guns?

"What do you think the dope is?" he asked Little Billy.

"I've just been thinking about it," was the reply. "Not sure, but I'd make a bet it is chloral. There was a small bottle of it in the chest. By Jove, if it's the chloral, those devils will be fissuked right enough! It is regular knock-out stuff. Smells nasty, but I don't think it would be noticed in soup—not in fo'c'sle soup. But commence with your yarn, Martin!"

Martin complied. He told briefly what had happened to him from the moment MacLean had aroused him the night before till the moment when the hunchback's strange and sudden appearance in the entrance to the dreadful windy cave had borne such tragic, yet fortunate, results.

"Six of them snuffed out in a moment!" he concluded. "Do you know, Billy, I feel like praying thanks. Ichi was preparing to murder me, I know; and then it happened. The six of them! I—I kind of feel it was more than chance—their death, and your appearance. Events are being ordered for us. The bosun will win, I'm sure. It is Carew who is feyed, Billy."

"Ay, let us hope so," commented Little Billy. "Carew, and all the rest of his gang, and the Nippon Trading Company to boot. The world would be sweeter if they were all to meet feydom. It is a pity poor old Sails could not have seen more clearly and warned more plainly. Poor devil! He could not foretell his own finish! So it was his concern about my absence that caused him to awaken you last night?"

"Yes. But he was wrong. You're not under a black shroud, Billy. You're here, alive. He was mistaken. It was his own death he saw in the darkness. I—I heard them finish him, Billy—horrible!"

"I don't know, Sails may have been right," said Little Billy. "Perhaps I shall yet lie under the shroud, before this business is finished. I have had a feeling—oh, well, no matter. I would not care, if my end would aid. You don't realize what the happy family means to me, Martin—the captain, and bosun, and Ruth. They gave me my manhood. I was outcast, a sodden beast, and they—oh, I'd die willingly for them, Martin! And Ruth——"

He paused, choked by his emotion. Martin, moved by the same feelings that shook the hunchback, reached out and understandingly patted the other's shoulder.

"MacLean—he was a good old man, my friend," went on Billy, after a moment. "A harmless, golden-hearted fellow. I—I saw him, Martin. Stumbled across his body, washed up on the beach. This knife I have belonged to him. They had cut his throat—poor Sails."

Martin stared down upon the anchored ship. His eyes were savage. He, too, had grown to look upon the testy but warm-hearted Scot as a valued friend. A hot, savage hatred of the lounging figures on the decks suddenly possessed him. The bloody-handed yellow dogs! They had killed Sails—and Rimoa and Oomak, who had also been his good friends. Oh, if he were only on board, to assist in the reckoning! And that superior, fatuous fiend in the cabin. Oh, if only he could fasten his fingers upon Carew's windpipe! He would fey the renegade beast, by George! He would throttle his life out, and gloat when the dying breath came gasping through the cruel lips. If he could but get hands upon Carew, that evil, sneering mouth would never again babble the brute's unclean love into *her* unwilling ears. By Heaven, no!

And Martin, grim-faced, and savage-eyed, sat on the cave floor and stared out

at the ship. He was swayed by a tempest of violent and elemental emotions. His mildest thought was blood-thirsty and would have shocked to horror Josiah Smatt's dapper, romantic-minded clerk.

Little Billy commenced to speak again.

"They must have murdered Rimoa and Oomak while Sails was in the cabin, waking you. I suppose they would have got me, too, had I been on board."

"Had you been on board?" echoed Martin.

"Yes, I was on my way to the beach ere they boarded. Passed them on the way. It was an accident, just a simple mishap, though nearly fatal, at that.

"It happened just after I had roused MacLean from his snooze in the galley. I felt my way aft—you remember how dark it was. I reached the capstan, where you found my tobacco-pouch, and paused there, intending to fill a pipeful. I found my pipe was gone from my pocket, and then I remembered that I had left it lying in the dingey, when I came aboard after sounding to anchor in the afternoon.

"Well, you know what state my nerves were in, Martin. I was jumpy and unreasonable from the booze craving. I suddenly felt that I must have that pipe. No other pipe would do; I wanted that pipe that was in the dingey. So I crossed to the side and felt around until I discovered the boat's painter. I overhauled the painter till the boat was beneath me—I had climbed up on the rail, and was perched there on my knees. Then, as I twisted around to make the painter fast, I overbalanced and fell.

"I guess I struck the dingey's gunwale with my forehead and bounced off into the water. I came to the surface, instinctively fighting for life and too stunned for the moment to cry out. I needed all my breath, anyway, to keep afloat. The black fog isolated me. I couldn't see the ship, though by her side. The tide was flooding like a mill-race, and I felt myself being carried along.

"The water was icy cold, and my clothes were dragging me under. It was chilly last night, you remember, Martin. I had on sea boots, and reefer coat. I struggled desperately, under water half the time, and managed to slip off the boots. Then I wriggled out of coat and guernsey. I was near the beach, I knew, and I was almost spent.

"Then, I passed a boat. Oh, I couldn't see it, though it was close by. But I heard oars—or fancied I did. I tried to call out, but was too far gone, and a mouthful of salt water was my reward. The sounds died away, and a moment later I felt the ground beneath my feet.

"I struggled through the surf to the beach and threw myself down, utterly exhausted. I had hardly strength enough to think about the boat I fancied I had passed. What I did think was that it was merely my imagination. I felt I was safe, that after a while, when I got my wind back, I could hail the brig and have a boat sent for me.

"Then I heard a shriek coming out of the darkness. It must have been MacLean. Then shouts, and a shot, and Ruth's scream—and silence. Oh, I knew what had happened at the first sound, and the knowledge lent me strength. I knew then that I had passed a boat—Carew's boat.

"I don't like to think about the time that followed, Martin. I went lunatic with anxiety. Ruth's scream! What did it mean? I ranged up and down the beach like a madman. But what could I do? I retained enough sense to know I couldn't swim out to the ship, against the tide. It was a miracle that I made the beach, even with the tide, in that Arctic water. Then, after a while—how long after I don't know, each moment seemed an age—I stumbled upon MacLean's body. He—he couldn't have been quite dead when they threw him over, Martin, or he wouldn't have gained the beach so quickly.

"But he was quite dead then. I took his knife. I felt I might have a chance to use it. And, God, how I longed for the opportunity! Finding MacLean sort of steadied me—sort of jolted me back into a reasoning frame. I began to think sanely. Then the fog commenced to thin, and I slipped into a cave.

"Pretty soon the fog lifted altogether, and it was a bright, calm morning. I could see, from my cave, the Japs parading the decks. But I didn't see them making preparations for getting under way, and that surprised me. I reasoned then that the ambergris was still ashore, and that they would come after it.

"So, I wasn't surprised when the whaleboat started for the beach. It was what I had been waiting for.

"You see, I thought it was all ended for the happy family. I knew Carew, and the

Japs. I thought you had all been killed, and Ruth—well, I was waiting till that boat landed, and then I was going to do a little work with Sails' knife before they finished me.

"Then I saw you in the boat, and I thought that perhaps there was some hope. I thought that if you were alive, some of the others might also be alive. So I lurked in the cave, instead of showing myself."

"I saw you," interrupted Martin. "Lord, what a start the glimpse of your face gave me! I was convinced you were on board. I thought I'd seen a ghost."

"You went into the Elephant Head," continued Little Billy, "and I followed after. The cave I was in communicated with that passage you traveled. I was able to fall in behind you without showing myself on the beach.

"I trailed your party to the mouth of the windy cave, and stopped just short of the lantern light, and watched you cross the ledge. Then came that awful blast from that crack—did you notice it was steam blowing off, Martin?—and I saw you struggling with Ichi, and the pair of them roll over the edge. I thought I'd lend a hand, but the sight of me was too much for that sailor.

"Well, the poor devils are gone. Suppose I should feel sorry for them, but I don't. I know just what cruel, heartless brutes they were. What surprises me is that they didn't make a clean job of slaughtering all hands, instead of stopping with the third man. It would have been more like them."

"It was Carew who prevented that, I think," said Martin. He rehearsed for the hunchback the scene in the cabin. "Carew is wild about Ruth, and she has him bluffed," he added. "I think, if it had been left to Ichi, we would all have been killed and the directions for finding the ambergris tortured out of Ruth. But Carew prevented—he hopes to gain Ruth's favor. The cur! He wants her to love him! He even hinted at placing all the rest of us safely ashore. But I think he was lying."

"Depend on it he was," asserted Little Billy. "Place you all safely ashore on this island, I suppose—and conduct you to the edge of that chasm, and personally chuck you over. That's Carew! And that's an awful hole, Martin. Got on my nerves. Listen! She's blowing again!"

Silently, and with a tensed body, Martin listened to the growing volume of sound, down in the black depths behind him. It was a dull roaring to his ears, here in the dry cave. Slowly it subsided. Then came the rumble, and the shake.

"It happens continuously," commented Little Billy. "Every few moments, since I've been ashore. Blow the roof off some day. So it is Wild Bob's heart that saved you! And Ruth has stood him off! Oh—good girl! Don't the moments drag, Martin? Lord, I hate to sit here and wait! Not so bad as the waiting I did before I saw you, though. That was without hope—God! I thought John Barleycorn had shown me all over hell, but this morning I journeyed clear through hell, and beyond! I wonder what the time is now, Martin?"

As if in answer to his query, seven strokes on the bell came floating across the water from the ship.

"Seven bells!" exclaimed Little Billy. "A half-hour more till they tackle their soup! If it only works! If it fails, Martin, I have a scheme. You have a gun, and I have a knife. By and by, Carew will come ashore to see what has happened to Ichi. We can meet him in the cave below!"

"Yes, I was thinking of the same plan," replied Martin.

And then silence fell for a few moments, and they sat staring at the ship.

"SAY, Martin, do you realize that we are probably sitting on the exact spot where Winters sat, while he wrote up his log, over a quarter-century ago?" broke out Little Billy suddenly. "This hole here—it must be the window he wrote about; the opening through which he and Silva hoisted the ambergris. Wish we had a rope. Lord, just think of those two chaps finding their way through the windy cave, and into this place, with only a flickering candle-light to guide them!"

Martin grunted a monosyllabic assent. He was not interested. His attention was all for the ship.

"Do you smell anything unusual?" persisted the hunchback.

Martin considered, unconsciously. Suddenly, he was aware he smelled an unfamiliar odor. It was a musky smell. He admitted its presence to his companion.

"Well, ambergris has a musk odor," stated Little Billy. "And this is the dry

cave. The code is inside my coat pocket, at the bottom of the bay—but I remember the words, 'north corner dry cave.' We have half an hour to wait, Martin—let us find the stuff."

But Martin shook his head. He had no thought to waste on ambergris. His whole mind was centered upon the ship—upon the little, round port of a cabin room, at which he stared as if the very fixity of his gaze would annihilate distance and permit him to glimpse the loved form within. Was she still safe? That was the thought that filled his mind.

Little Billy fidgeted for a moment.

"By Jove! I must do something!" he declared. "I'll look for it, myself."

He got to his feet and picked up the still burning lantern they had fetched from the regions below. Then he walked into the gloom of the vast cavern.

He was gone but a couple of moments, when his shout startled Martin. His clear, high voice rang clarion-like in that vaulted place.

"I've found it, Martin! Here — come here!"

Martin turned his head, his attention caught at last. He saw the light bobbing up and down in the distant darkness.

"Come!" called Little Billy.

Martin got up and strode toward the voice.

The odor of musk grew stronger with each step; and when he reached the hunchback's side, the smell was almost overpowering. Little Billy was dancing excitedly.

"Here — look! Our million!" he exclaimed, and held his lantern aloft.

Martin saw he was at the end of the cave. At his left hand was the outer wall, before him the cross wall. Where they joined, nature had formed a pocket, or alcove. It was into this half-formed chamber Little Billy directed him to gaze.

He saw a pile of kegs, stowed in neat tiers, and almost filling the niche from wall to wall, and floor to sloping roof. Their number astonished him.

Martin's knowledge of ambergris was yet somewhat vague; he was prepared to find a couple of barrels, or, perhaps, an iron-bound chest or two, filled with the smelly treasure, ample room for less than a ton weight, he thought. But this regiment of kegs! Why if they all contained ambergris, there must be tons of the stuff!

"See it, Martin?" cried the volatile hunchback, their troubles forgotten in the exultation of the moment. "By Jove, the entire fifteen hundred pounds, or I'll eat this lantern! Look—just the same as Winters' and Silva's hands left it, twenty-five years ago! And—*phew*—it hasn't lost any of its virtues!"

"But — fifteen hundred pounds!" exclaimed Martin. "Good Heavens! All those kegs can't be filled with it!"

"Sure! There is hardly any weight to ambergris," asserted Little Billy. "Specific gravity is .09—takes quite a lump to make an ounce. Take a lot of kegs to contain fifteen hundred pounds. Look!"

He set the lantern on the floor, and, stepping forward, grasped one of the kegs. He tossed it into the air as lightly as if it were filled with feathers.

"Heft one, Martin!" he exclaimed.

Then he rapped his knuckles smartly over the staves of the keg he held, testing the wood.

"Good oak stuff," he commented. "Solid as the day it was put together. Time, and earthquake, haven't harmed this pile at all."

Martin lifted one and, though forewarned, was surprised by the trifling weight. The kegs were about the size of ordinary pickle-kegs, though more solidly put together, and he judged that the one he held did not weigh more than thirty pounds at the most. It was filled, he knew, for when he held it level with his face, the musk that exuded from the wood made him choke.

"Fifty-five," stated Little Billy, concluding a count of the pile.

Martin nodded glumly. He could not enthuse like the mercurial hunchback; he could not wrench his mind free from the ship. He wanted to get back to the window. What if a million dollars did lay before his eyes? They would not aid Ruth!

He stared resentfully, almost with hatred, at the uninspiring kegs. How could they help their lot? He would gladly have bartered his share in the pile for one of the rifles the yellow men had. He would enjoy pot-shooting from the window. He would have given the pile to be at the boatswain's side, during the coming struggle. By George! It must be nearly eight bells. Yip must be getting ready to dish out the soup.

"Come—let us get back to the opening!" he said to Little Billy.

On the tail of his words, before Little

Billy could make answer, there came to their ears, very faintly, the sound of the ship's bell. They cast a startled glance at each other. Martin picked up the lantern, and, of an accord, they turned their backs upon the ambergris, and fled for the distant patch of daylight.

CHAPTER XXII

"FISSUK"

THEIR first glance through the opening caused them both to exclaim with dismay. For, though eight bells had been struck, there was no sign of meal-time on board the *Cohasset*. There was an attention not at all gastronomical in the attitudes of the six men visible on the main deck, while, on the poop, Carew stood talking with Asoki. All hands, even the hatch guards, seemed to be staring beachward.

Carew suddenly cupped his hands and sent a bellowing hail across the water. The hail reached the two friends clearly:

"Ahoy! Ashore there! Ichi—ahoy!"

Martin cast a swift glance to the beach below. The whaleboat was still high and dry, the rising tide many feet distant. It was not concern for the boat, then, but worry over Ichi's non-return that troubled Carew.

Martin's gaze returned to the ship. One of the yellow sailors had swung himself onto the rail and he was overhauling the painter of the dingey. The Jap drew the small boat under the Jacob's ladder and made fast the slack, leaving the boat alongside, at the spot where Martin had embarked in the whaleboat. Then another sailor handed him a pair of oars, and he tossed them into the dingey.

"He is coming ashore!" thought Martin.

He considered swiftly. His dismay of the moment previous had given way to a feeling almost of exultation. Why, if Carew came ashore, it would mean a further reduction of the force holding the ship! He would be accompanied by at least one man —a sailor to pull the boat. After his departure, the remaining seven would probably eat. Martin saw that Yip was ready; the Chinaman's head was popping in and out of the galley door.

If Carew came ashore hunting Ichi, it would aid the lads in their uprising, reasoned Martin; the enemy would be leaderless. And when Carew landed—a sudden fierce joy pervaded Martin and his fingers unconsciously caressed the butt of the gun he had taken from Ichi—well, Mister Wild Bob Carew would meet with the surprise of his life!

Little Billy's mind was evidently pursuing a similar course of thought. He was babbling excitedly.

"He's coming ashore! Oh, good, good! He's my meat—he's mine!"

"He is *not!*" emphatically declared Martin. "By Heaven! Carew belongs to me! You leave him to me, Billy—I am the larger, and besides, I have the gun."

But the unconscious object of their sudden dispute abruptly disposed of the question, at least for the time being. Carew, after addressing the bow-legged mate at some length, turned away and disappeared down the cabin hatch. Martin swore with disappointment.

Asoki appeared to address the men on the main deck; then he leaned against the taffrail and resumed his solitary spying upon the beach. The two men who had been engaged with the dingey walked forward. One of the guards stationed at the main hatch left his post and also went forward. He carried his rifle with him; Martin saw the barrel glint in the sunlight.

The trio paused before the galley door, on the port side of the deck. They were immediately joined by a fourth man. He also carried a rifle; the deck-house hid the fore hatch from Martin's view, but he divined instantly that the fourth man was one of the fore hatch guards.

Martin was breathing rapidly with suppressed excitement. He flung disjointed words at the equally excited hunchback:

"Luck with us, Billy! Look—only one rifle left on the fore hatch, same as the main hatch! They're getting their grub—four of them eat now—only one man at the hatch. Oh, will it work?"

Charley Bo Yip handed out the mess kits. The Chinaman also, evidently, had the men's mess gear, for none of the four entered the forecastle after plates or pannikins. Instead, they received the food Yip handed them, and carried it to the sunny, open space of deck abaft the galley. They set the pans down and squatted around; the two armed men first stacking their guns against the deck-house.

It seemed to the eager watchers in the

cave that a long hour dragged by; in reality, a couple of moments passed. Then Yip bobbed out of the galley by the starboard door. He stood at the corner of the house and intently regarded the squatting four. Suddenly he turned and darted forward, and was lost to view around the forward corner of the deck-house.

Something was happening to the feasting four. The "fissuk" was working. One of them suddenly flopped over on his back and commenced to fling his legs and arms about in an extraordinary fashion. A second rose slowly to his feet and slowly pivoted around. He seemed to be plucking and tearing at his own throat. Either he, or the man threshing upon the deck, screamed horribly. Then the pivoting fellow staggered toward the rail, flung himself half overboard, and fell back upon the deck where he writhed about in the same way his companion was doing.

"Good Lord, what is it?" cried Martin. "Chloral would not act like that! Look!"

The remaining two of the quartet were on their feet, their attitude proclaiming their surprise. Their startled outcry reached the cave faintly. The bow-legged mate rushed forward to the break of the poop. The guard at the main hatch left his post and rushed toward his stricken shipmates.

Both the "fissuked" men were quiet. The three Japs were leaning over the one who had first been seized. Around the forward corner of the house appeared the giant figure of the boatswain, leaping swiftly aft, and behind him came others.

He reached the after end of the house ere the Japs spied him. The hatch guard raised his rifle and fired pointblank and missed, for the boatswain stooped, picked up the fellow who had tried to climb the rail, and flung him at the armed man.

The body hurtled true to the mark—the guard was hurled clear across the deck by the terrific impact, and the gun flew from his grasp. He fell in the scuppers, the limp missile atop of him.

The other two Japs flung themselves upon the boatswain, and Martin thought he saw the flash of steel. Asoki, on the poop, had drawn a revolver and was shooting forward.

The man who followed next behind the boatswain—Martin thought it was the Australian, Hardy—leaped past the struggling giant and grabbed up one of the two guns leaning against the wall of the house. He flung it to his shoulder and shot aft. Asoki whirled about, dropped and lay still. Almost in the same instant sounded two other shots, and Hardy flung up his hands and fell on his face.

"Carew shooting from the cabin!" Martin tried to shout at Little Billy, but so excited was he the words would not articulate.

Another of the *Cohasset's* men seized the second of the reclining weapons. At the distance, Martin was not sure, but he looked like old Chips.

The Jap whom the boatswain had bowled over was scrambling to his feet. The *Cohasset* man shot, and the Jap collapsed. Martin knew, from the double flash, and the deeper note of the explosion, that a shotgun had been fired.

One of the boatswain's followers had picked up the weapon the hatch guard had dropped on the deck. Now, he held it clubbed, and he brought it down with a full sweep upon the head of one of the boatswain's assailants. The fellow crumpled up, and his sprawled form was walked upon.

The boatswain was swinging the remaining Jap about his head. The giant's hands clutched the man's ankles, and he was spinning on his heel as if he were a shot-putter or hammer-thrower. Suddenly, he stopped short. The Jap's form shot forward, clean over the rail, and curved gracefully into the water a dozen feet from the ship's side. He did not reappear on the surface.

Two more shots sounded from the cabin. One of the boatswain's men staggered, and then grotesquely hopped on one leg across the deck and in through the open galley door. Little Billy giggled hysterically.

The *Cohasset* crowd scattered and retreated forward at these last shots. Several took refuge in the galley, others disappeared around the forward end of the house—all except the boatswain and Chips. They were kneeling by the side of two of the Japs, apparently rifling the dead men's pockets.

Martin divined their ghoulish enterprise—they were looking for ammunition for the three captured guns. Another shot from the cabin. The body the boatswain handled gave a convulsive flop. Then boatswain and Chips had retreated, the latter diving into the galley, while the boatswain streaked forward, around the end of the house.

The short and furious battle was ended—how short the time it had occupied, Martin

could but dimly realize. It was unbelievable that, but a few moments previous, that death-dotted deck had witnessed the peaceable beginning of a midday meal. He was shaking with an ague of wild, surging emotions. His mind raced madly. He tried to count, to reason.

On the poop lay the body of Asoki. He must be dead; he had not moved since he fell. On the main deck, in the open space between the deck-house and the mainmast, were the other still forms—two Japs in the scuppers, whither the boatswain had hurled them; two more in the center of the deck, where also lay their own man, who had been shot down from the cabin. Another Jap, the boatswain had catapulted over the side. The solitary guard on the fore hatch, Martin reasoned, must also have been accounted for—Yip must have disposed of him.

Martin reckoned up swiftly. Seven men! Seven of them gone. Then there were but two of their enemies left—Carew and the cabin guard. Only two of the enemy, and their men now had arms. Triumphant joy filled Martin's breast. He shouted the intelligence, almost incoherently, to the hunchback by his side.

Little Billy was holding himself in hand. His sober reply to Martin's words subdued Martin's spirits, and touched his heart with a chill of fear.

"Yes, two of them left," said Little Billy. "But they are in the cabin, and—Ruth is with them!"

Good God, Ruth! Would Ruth be harmed? Would Wild Bob, desperate and furious in defeat, with doom facing him, wreak a final vengeance upon Ruth and the old blind man, her grandfather? The dreadful thought tortured Martin and he stared down at the ship with unnerving apprehension stabbing at his heart.

A figure darted into sight around the forward end of the house. It started aft, running. A shrill, yodeling whoop reached Martin's ears. It was Charley Bo Yip. As he passed the galley, a man jumped out and attempted to stay him. But Yip eluded the grasp, and continued aft, screeching his wild chant. His white apron flapped about him. He waved something over his head as he ran—something that looked in the distance like a child's toy balloon.

He reached the after limit of the main-hatch, and paused, and made as if to throw the thing he carried at the cabin. Then he humped up and fell on his face, and the balloon bounced across the deck into the scuppers. Yip lay still, and the sound of a single shot came across the water to Martin.

There ensued a moment of quiet. The boatswain and his followers kept concealed, and no more shots sounded from the cabin. Martin was gnawed by a biting impatience. Why did they hang back? Why didn't they rush the cabin? God! Didn't they realize that Ruth was at Carew's mercy? The cowards! Oh, if he were only there!

THEN the quiet ended. The boatswain and his men poured into sight, from forward and from the galley, but, instead of rushing aft, they stood still on the deck and stared toward the cabin. They were roaring shouts. Their voices reached Martin's ears like hoarse, growling execrations.

Because the flooding tide held the ship stern on to the beach, the main deck entrance to the cabin was concealed from the sight of the two watchers in the cave opening. But Martin sensed that something was happening about that door to the cabin alleyway, something terrible, something that held the boatswain and the crew transfixed. His blood was running cold with dread. What was it? Was it Ruth? Oh, if he could only see!

He saw. And the sight at once aroused him to wild fury. For three figures suddenly appeared at the rail, at the spot where the Jacob's ladder hung down the side. The first was the Jap. He held a rifle upon the group forward, but did not fire. The second was Carew, and the third was Ruth. Ruth's form was concealed by a long, black cloak, and she seemed to be leaning on Carew's shoulder, but Martin sensed that the outlaw was holding her to him with an encircling arm. He sensed also—for his aching eyes could not discern that at the distance—that Carew was threatening either Ruth, or the sailors forward, with some weapon he held in his free hand.

The Jap suddenly vaulted the rail and dropped into the dingey, alongside. Carew, keeping Ruth between his body and the men, wriggled himself up onto the rail. Then he compelled the girl to clamber up beside him. He descended the Jacob's ladder into the boat and Ruth followed.

The Jap, already at the oars, gave way,

and the boat dropped astern and headed for the beach, Carew kneeling, facing Ruth, and Ruth huddled in the sternsheets.

The crowd of men swept to the side. The boatswain leaped upon the rail and raised a rifle. But he did not shoot. If he really intended to, he was arrested by a figure that suddenly appeared from the cabin, fleeing forward. It was the white-haired captain. Even in the midst of his tumult of thought, Martin noted with surprise how surely the blind man directed his running feet toward the boatswain.

But Martin had but the single glance for the captain. His eyes were on the frenziedly pulled dingey, leaping toward the beach on the swift tide. But a glance for the small boat, also. Then he looked at Little Billy, and the hunchback looked at him.

Martin seized the lantern, and the two dashed headlong into the darkness of the cave.

Martin never remembered much about his second, and headlong, passage of the caves. But three incidents of the flight afterward remained in his memory. First, when they reached the point where the dry cave sloped tunnel-wise to the hole that opened to the cave below, his feet slipped upon the smooth rock, and he tumbled head over heels down the incline. The lantern was flung from his hand, and, smashing against the wall, went out. But he retained his grasp upon the revolver.

Second, he recalled dashing recklessly across the wet, sloping ledge in the windy cave, on the very edge of the moaning abyss. Little Billy was close behind him.

When he reached the other side, he grabbed up the second lantern, which was still burning, and, without lessening stride, plunged into the black passage that led to the Elephant Head.

Third, when he turned the last corner, and saw just before him the patch of daylight made by the opening in the Elephant Head. At that instant the cold finger of reason touched his mind and he halted. Little Billy, racing close behind, bumped into him violently.

"Hush! Let us look first!" Martin cautioned the spluttering hunchback.

He set down the lantern and crept to the entrance, Little Billy at his heels. He looked out.

Not twenty paces distant, backing up the beach toward him, was the Japanese sailor, his rifle at shoulder and upon the ship. A few feet in front, and to one side of the sailor, were Carew and Ruth. Carew was also backing toward the cave, and he still held Ruth in an encircling grasp, her body shielding him from those on the ship.

The sailor must have heard Martin as the latter leaped forward. He wheeled about, and a ludicrous expression of surprise flashed on the yellow features. The rifle and the revolver exploded simultaneously.

A hot breath touched Martin's cheek. The Japanese dropped the rifle, clutched his stomach, and fell upon his knees. He turned round and round on his knees, like a dog making ready for bed, and then curled up on the sand.

But Martin was not watching the lesser man's manner of dying. He was leaping toward the chief, a cry of horror frozen on the roof of his mouth. For Carew had half turned at the sound of the double shot. His jaw had sagged for an instant at sight of Martin and Little Billy. Then his features set with an insane and murderous purpose.

He held Ruth with one encircling arm. She was struggling, but she was helpless in that muscular grasp. In his free hand, Carew held a naked knife. With it, he suddenly slashed at the girl. She wrenched and wriggled to avoid the blow, and the knife but slit the shoulder of her cloak.

Martin, jumping toward them, and almost within hand-grasp, stumbled over the body of the Japanese and sprawled heavily. Even as he was falling, he felt Little Billy leap by him.

He hunched himself to his knees. He saw his comrade clinging to Carew's towering form, endeavoring futilely to thrust the big man with MacLean's knife. They whirled in their tracks.

Martin feared to shoot, and afterward he bitterly repented not taking the chance. The affray lasted but a moment. The hunchback was no match for the six-foot madman he engaged.

Martin saw Carew's knife flash downward—it disappeared in his friend's breast. Little Billy seemed to hang for an instant as on a hook. Then the reddened blade withdrew, and, hands over the spot, Little Billy stumbled backward.

Ruth was lying on the sand where Carew had flung her at Little Billy's onslaught. Carew brandished his weapon and took a half step toward her.

"You shall not have her!" he shouted to Martin.

Martin shot. Carew paused his wild gesture in mid-air. For a second he stood statuesque, while his eyes blinked rapidly, and an expression of stupid surprise composed his contorted features. Then he coughed slightly and pitched forward upon his face on the sand.

CHAPTER XXIII

TABLE TALK

IT WAS a sultry, mid-September sun that glared that afternoon upon the city by the Golden Gate. Oldtimers cocked a weather eye and murmured, "Earthquake weather." But the heat seemed not to still in any degree the usual busy bustle of the city. Market Street, at Powell, was jammed with its regular afternoon clanging, banging, gas-smelling traffic, and swarms of World's Fair tourists.

The clock before the jewelry store read eight minutes to three o'clock. A man paused on the sidewalk beneath the clock and stared solemnly and unbelievably up at it. Passers-by gazed curiously at him; and he was worth a second glance.

He filled the eye. He was huge, a giant in stature, and he was strikingly attired in the loudest check that a thorough search of the city's tailor shops had brought to light. His shoes were generous lumps of bright, bright yellow, and the jovial red face, and fiery hair, harmonized somewhat violently with green tie and purple derby. All in all, the big man was a vision that jolted pleasurably the jaded Exposition sightseers.

The big man started across the street. He did not deviate his course one inch to accommodate truck, street-car, or deadly jitney bus; and, perforce, the traffic paused while he rolled majestically from curb to curb, superbly unconscious of the traffic policeman's warning hand.

Perhaps it was the brilliant spectacle he made that won him immunity from bumps and an indulgent smile from the officer. Perhaps it was—well, he was certainly not three sheets in the wind, but a jury in a dry town might have decided he was one sheet, and a possible fraction, in that direction. He gained the far curb, headed up Powell Street, and disappeared into the wide entrance of Tait's.

If it were uncomfortably hot upon the street, it was pleasantly cool in Tait's. The wide, main dining-room of the big café possessed a cunningly graduated temperature, especially designed to soothe a heated public. Moreover, throughout the spacious place there sounded the pleasing and seductive tinkle of ice in tall glasses, mingling with the energetic fiddling of the orchestra.

The odor of well-cooked viands tinged faintly and spicily the air, the waiters scurried quietly, the afternoon crowd was well dressed and good to look upon. There should have been nothing about Tait's at that hour to mar the serenity of mind of a patron. But there was.

The "Man Who Knew Everything" sat at a table by the entrance, facing the "Sweet Thing." The table was a desirable one, but The Man Who Knew Everything was distinctly nettled. For he was also The Man Who Eats Here Often, and consequently, in Tait's, entitled to be considered somebody. But now, when he had reserved this table, and brought the Sweet Thing here for the express purpose of impressing upon her mind what an important chap he was, he discovered that his favorite waiter, Louis, had been supplanted by a lumbering oaf of an untrained bus-boy, to whom he was nobody at all. It was outrageous! He had depended upon Louis, the deft and deferring Louis, whose subtle flattery could make a dustman appear a railroad president. But now the service was rotten, the Sweet Thing was openly bored by the gems of wisdom which dropped from his lips, and—confound it!—he had a right to be sore.

He caught the lordly eye of the passing head waiter. But T. M. W. K. E. gained scant sympathy from that dignitary. One must indeed be a somebody to humble the head waiter.

"Sorry—Louis engaged this afternoon—private party—wedding crowd!" he mumbled, and passed on.

"Oh, I wonder who it is!" chirped the Sweet Thing, sitting up with an awakened interest.

T. M. W. K. E. bit his lip.

In through the entrance rolled a huge, red-headed man in a checker-board suit. The head waiter's face lightened, and he hastened to the newcomer.

"Yes sir, yes sir—waiting!" the head waiter was heard to say. And the giant answered rumblingly something that sounded like—

"Blimme—late—swiggle——"

Then the head waiter quickly piloted the big man across the floor and led him into the corridor whereon the private dining-rooms were situated.

"Oh, I wonder who he is!" said the Sweet Thing.

T. M. W. K. E. gulped.

"Why that is—er—why, Jeff Wilbur! The fighter, you know—the champ! Hot sport! They say he's a terrible brute. Beats wife—gambles——"

A clock overhead emitted three cuckoos. T. M. W. K. E.'s eye roved. The life of Jeff Wilbur was almost exhausted of sensational episodes, and the Sweet Thing's interest was visibly subsiding.

A messenger boy ambled in through the door. He held out a yellow envelope, and addressed the head waiter frankly, as man to man.

"Say, sport, whaddeye know 'bout it? Telergram for a guy named Cap. Dabney. Hotel sent me here."

"Yes, yes—he is here—I'll take it!" exclaimed the haughty chieftain of the servitors, unbending graciously.

He seized the telegram and scribbled the receipt in the boy's book. Then he flopped a half-dollar into the young man's astonished palm and, turning, hurried off toward the region of the private rooms.

"Gee whiz! That cap. guy must be some pebble round here!" commented Mercury. And he bit the coin and ambled out.

"Oh, I wonder who he is!" dimpled the Sweet Thing.

The anxious face of T. M. W. K. E. brightened with relief. Here was a new field to exploit!

"Who? You mean Captain Crab—er—Slabney? Oh, yes—know his family. Too bad—one of our war millionaires—shipping man—couple of tubs—fortune in freights. Nice people—too bad—turned his head. Yes, usual thing—wine, women—wicked old devil. They say he drinks two quarts of whisky every day. They say——"

CAPTAIN DABNEY finished reading the telegram and lifted his clear-seeing eyes to the others who sat about the gleaming, flower-banked table. Martin and Ruth ceased for the moment their surreptitious hand-squeezing and the boatswain paused in his rambling excuse for his tardiness (. . . "was comin' straight, swiggle me, an' I meets a bloke what I used to be shipmates with . . . ") and sat up very straight in his chair.

"It is from Levy, the New York jobber," announced the captain. "He has disposed of the last of the ambergris, at $45."

"Ow—more money to spend!" rumbled the boatswain. "Swiggle me stiff! I never thought they was so much money!"

Martin drew a note-book from his pocket, and busied himself for a moment consulting and adding figures.

"Here is an approximate statement," he said. "The ambergris weighed out 1,458 pounds. Guess evaporation, or miscalculation accounts for the difference from Winters' estimate. We have disposed of the entire lot at an average price of $42 an ounce, giving us a total of $979,776. Our outlay, so far has amounted to about $90-000—bonuses to the crew, $80,000; expenses of voyage, $7,000; fines paid to clear the captain for skipping port last Spring without a clearance, $1,000; and about $2,000 we, ourselves, have drawn. Balance to be divided nearly $900,000. Captain to take half—other half to be split between the rest of us."

"Swiggle me stiff, you can juggle them figgers nigh as easy as Little Billy could!" ejaculated the boatswain admiringly.

"Hum—more than $100,000 for each of you," mused the captain. "You two are starting life together pretty well fixed. You won't have to dodge the rent man!"

Martin smiled happily at the rosy face of his bride of a day. "No, we won't be cramped. It is more, much more, than I ever thought I'd be lucky enough to possess." A shade touched his face. "But—I'd give all the money, gladly, if only Little Billy were here!"

"And so would I!" exclaimed the captain. "Ay, and more than the money—I would give my eyesight, gladly become blind again, if Little Billy could come back to us! Ay, lad, we have paid dearly for the gold! Little Billy, and Oomak, and Rimoa, and MacLean! And Hardy, and Yip—they were new hands, but good boys. And Little Billy—dear Little Billy!"

The little company about the table fell silent for a moment. Martin's eyes looked backward, upon memory, and the brightly bedecked room faded from view.

He was again on the black beach of Fire Mountain, crouching before the black hole

in the Elephant Head. Ruth was beside him, her hand in his, and together they watched the life ebb from the valiant cripple. Again he felt the poignant despair of that moment; heard again the mournful wail from the "deep place," the wild screaming of the gulls, and the sobbing breaths of the dying man.

And Ruth leaned over and wiped clean the blood-specked lips, and her hot tears rained upon Billy's face; and Little Billy smiled, and his fingers touched caressingly the clasped hands of him and Ruth.

"Don't grieve," came the choking whisper. "I am glad — best way — a misfit! Cherish her, Marty—I love her, too!"

And Ruth kissed the pain-twisted mouth, and again Martin was awed by the beautiful peace that composed the tortured features. Afterward, when the dreadful last spasm was over, he took Ruth's black cloak and covered the pitiful form, from which the cheerful spirit of their friend was gone.

Then he seated himself again by Ruth, and held her close, while she sobbed upon his breast. He was numbed of mind, unfeeling, unthinking.

He watched dully the landing of the boat from the ship; without wonder he beheld the captain leap ashore and rush toward him, jumping over Carew's obstructing body, with a plain possession of sight. Then, the boatswain's cry pierced his stupor:

"Ow, Billy! It's the shroud—the black shroud!"

The memory of that grief-stricken cry pierced his preoccupation this time also. With a start, Martin awoke to his surroundings, to find himself tightly clutching his wife's hand beneath the table-cover. He saw that his companions were also musing over the past. Ruth's eyes were misty, and a big tear was rolling down the boatswain's nose.

This would never do! Sad thoughts must not begray this, his happy day. Nor would Little Billy wish to cast a shadow athwart the day. A kind thought, a warm and cheerful niche in memory, a happy word—that would most please the brave spirit of Little Billy. Martin considered how best to dispel the gloom of the moment.

"Did you drop in on the eye-doctor, this morning, as you said you would?" he addressed the captain.

A humorous light twinkled in the captain's clear eyes, and the shadow lifted from his face.

"Yes—walked in on him unannounced," said the captain. "He turned a nice pea-green color when I grabbed his hand. 'Hello, Doc, here's your hopeless case cured by the thump of a gun-butt!' says I. Then, he explained it, as a sawbones always will. 'A shock took your sight,' says he, 'and the shock from the blow that man struck you with your revolver restored your sight. How interesting!' 'Mighty interesting,' says I, and came away before he could touch me for a fee. Not that I would have grudged him a fee, even if it was Carew, and not the doctor, who gave me back my eyes.

"I tell you it's fine to see again! It was plain hell to be in darkness all those months —if it hadn't been for Ruth, I think I would have lost heart! Well, I owe Carew for the cure, I suppose, though the brute wished me anything but good, when he hit me, that night. And to think, I lay there unconscious, all the time they held the ship! What an awakening, though! There was no preparation for it—suddenly I had my wits, and saw the door open, and Ruth being forced across the cabin, with his knife at her breast!"

Ruth shrank against Martin's shoulder.

"Oh, don't talk about it today!" she cried, to the captain; and then, with the queer logic of her sex, she proceeded to do that very thing. "Oh, those were terrible moments, terrible hours! Martin gone, and grandfather unconscious—and he kept importuning me, through the door, pleading with me, threatening me, declaring he loved me. It was horrible! He was crazy, I think."

"Ay, he was crazy about you, lass," commented the captain. "And a good thing for us, under the circumstances. If it hadn't been for you, he would have made no bones about slaughtering all hands. I wager Ichi wanted to!"

"All I could do was wait, and hope a little, throughout that awful morning," continued Ruth. "I knew about the men in the hold. Yip had told me, when he brought me my breakfast. And I had slipped him the bottle of cholera medicine—I never dreamed he had that other bottle, too. And then came the shooting, and he burst in the door, and threw the cloak about me, and forced me to go with him. Oh, I thought it was the end!"

Ruth shuddered with the memory. Under the friendly cloth, Martin squeezed her hand comfortingly.

The boatswain swiggled himself stiff with soothing sympathy, and then hurriedly, and blushingly, excused himself. Martin sought to lead the conversation away from the dread specter of Carew.

"By George, that Chinaman was a wonder!" he exclaimed. "He gave absolutely no sign by his face of what he was planning. How he must have hated those Japs—yet he did not show it. And he probably had the poison in his pocket all the time. But then," Martin finished bromidically, "the Oriental mind is too subtle for a white man to analyze."

"Now, there you are wrong," promptly argued the captain. "I have known Chinamen these forty years. They think with a singular simplicity, with an elemental directness, and for that very reason we don't understand them. They are schooled to regard life as a game, and to make gamblers' masks of their faces. But, behind those masks, they think in a straight line.

"It is we Occidentals who are subtle. Our reasoning is clouded, and twisted, and colored by all manner of racial prejudices, conventional taboos, and moral fastidiousness. Take the lass, there—she would have willingly fought those Japs with a gun and shot them without much compunction. But she never thought of poisoning their food with a deadly drug. When she gave Yip the cholera medicine, at his suggestion, she thought only of afflicting them with gripes, thus aiding the boys by making the guards careless.

"Remember how horrified she was—how queer we all felt—when we discovered that Yip, besides putting the cholera medicine in the soup, had also poured strychnin into the coffee? An example of the subtleness, the over-refinement, of our Occidental minds. We possess an intense prejudice against the poisoner, even though he poisons in our behalf."

"Oh, I could never have eaten another thing Yip cooked, if he had not been killed," interjected Ruth.

"Yes, we would all have been uncomfortable, I fancy," went on the captain. "But Yip was not troubled with our qualms. He hated the Japs—they were both personal and national enemies. He wanted to kill them. To his simple mind, it did not matter a bit whether the Jap was killed by poison, or by a bullet or club, so long as he was killed. So he used the bottle of strychnin I had given him to clear the galley of rats. Lord—the whole bottle! A sip of that coffee was deadly. How he must have hated them!"

" 'Ow, swiggle me, yes—'ow 'e must 'ave 'ated them!" echoed the boatswain. "What a bloomin' start 'e gave me, when I poked my 'ead up through the 'atch! 'E'd bowled over the 'atch guard, and there 'e was, with the blighter's neck on the 'atch coaming, a chopping off 'is 'ead with a cleaver. 'E was 'ummin' a song while 'e chopped.

"Then, when we 'ad 'ad the scrap abaft the 'ouse—" the boatswain's eye lighted—"and a proper shindy it was—we ducked for'rd because Wild Bob was shootin' out through the cabin alleyway. There was Yip, dancin' on the 'atch, and wavin' the Jap's 'ead aloft! 'E was 'owlin' fine—and 'e was clean daft. 'E runs aft waving 'is bloody 'ead—guess 'e meant to 'eave it into the cabin, but Carew dropped 'im. Ay, 'e 'ated the Japs right enough. 'E told me once as 'ow they was swiping 'is country."

MARTIN saw that the sanguinary talk was distasteful to Ruth. She had not touched the dessert the pussy-footed, supple-backed Louis had placed before her, and she was telegraphing her distress beneath the tablecloth. Martin essayed to change the topic.

"Oh—I was down to the Police Court this morning," he addressed the captain. "Got the boys out all right. And say, I had a little talk with the captain of detectives and learned something. Spulvedo wasn't killed, or even seriously hurt, that night I met you folks. But when the police raided the Black Cruiser, after the gun fight, they discovered a cache of smuggled opium, and evidence connecting Smatt with it. Smatt skipped out, and Spulvedo got out on bail, and skipped too. When the captain of detectives learned that I was the indirect cause of their raid that night, he positively beamed upon me. That dive had long been a thorn in his side."

"I knew we needn't fear the police on that old score," remarked the captain. "But—did you have any difficulty in freeing the boys?"

"No, paid their fines, after the judge had

lectured them. Then I bundled them off aboard to recover."

"Pay the damages?" asked the captain.

"Yes. Trifling—mostly broken windows and bottles. Had to salve the feelings of two bouncers and a bartender who were suffering from contusions."

"I'll have to get out of here pretty soon," stated the captain positively. "My boys are not like an ordinary crew—they are my friends. I can't allow this to continue. Have to get out of 'Frisco—the Barbary Coast, and a crowd of sailormen with money in their pockets, is a bad combination. They would kill themselves before their bonuses were gone."

"I ran across a strange thing down at the court," added Martin. "Met a policeman with a broken nose. He told me that after they had taken the boys away, a wild giant had come raging down the street and set upon him."

"Oh, bosun!" cried Ruth reproachfully. It was easily seen at that moment, that Ruth was the mother, as well as the mate, of the *Cohasset*. She was chiding one of her children. "You know what you promised me, bosun!"

The giant squirmed uneasily in his chair, and his eyes rolled.

"Well—I didn't set on 'im," he confessed guardedly. " 'E run into my fist." He squinted hopefully at Ruth, but saw no forgiveness in her accusing face. "Ow, swiggle me stiff! I'll be 'appy when I'm to sea again!" he burst out. "The pubs is too close together in this bloomin' town. It ain't fair on a poor bloke, says I, to 'ave them so close. 'E ain't got 'arf a chance when 'e goes for a walk. And if 'e goes for to celebrate a little, on account o' a couple o' friends gettin' spliced—w'y, there's a blasted orsifer gettin' in 'is way! It ain't fair, says I. Swiggle me, I'll be glad when we sail!"

"We'll sail soon," affirmed the captain. "If I don't, I'll have a shipload of jim-jams on my hands; for, with the wedding on their minds, the boys will keep celebrating for weeks. I'll take that run down through the Islands, we were talking about. I'll clear just as soon as you two start on your trip. Have you decided where you are going, for your billing and cooing period?"

Martin and his wife glanced at each other and smiled. Then Martin threw his bomb.

"Yes, we have decided," he said. "We are going for a trip through the Islands, on board the old *Cohasset!*"

"Wow! Scuttle me Susie!" cheered the boatswain.

"Do you mean it?" cried the delighted captain.

"Yes—listen!" continued Martin. "We have talked it over, Ruth and I. It won't be just a honeymoon trip. We are going aboard to stay. The *Cohasset* is Ruth's home, the only home she knows. And I—what would I do on shore? Study law and develop into an old vulture like Smatt? Not on your life! Never catch me in an office again. I've had a taste of freedom! I like the sea—want to see more of it. And Ruth will be happier afloat, I know. So, we wish ourselves upon you captain, if you'll have us!"

"Have you?" cried Captain Dabney. "Oh, lad—lass—my heart has been heavy with the thought I'd sail without you!"

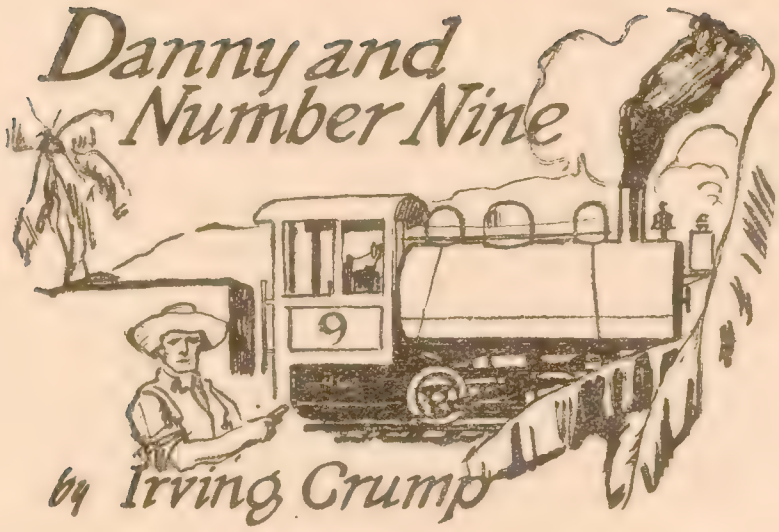
"And we can extend ourselves," went on Martin with rising enthusiasm. "We have the capital. We can pool our fortunes and start a trading company down there in the Islands—buy ships, and plantations, and make ourselves felt in affairs. We'll plan it all out. Will you join the pool, bosun?"

"Will I! Ow, swiggle me, but won't I—just!" cried the boatswain. "We'll call it the 'Big Four'—ow, there's the name, says I!" The giant heaved himself erect and held his long-stemmed wine-glass aloft. " 'Ere's to the Big Four! A long life and a jolly one! And—" he winked waggishly at Martin—"may all our troubles be little ones!"

And Martin looked at Ruth, and Ruth looked at the plain gold band on her finger, and they blushed.

THE END

Danny and Number Nine



by Irving Crump

THE SCUFFLE of feet, the rasping sound made by chairs being hastily pushed back, the thump of an overturned iron-topped café table and a volley of Latin expletives emanated from the doorway of Los Embarcaderos Café just a fraction of a second in advance of the uncombed and crusty person of Danny Carroll himself.

José Alvarez, the always polite though sometimes forceful proprietor, followed as far as the single stone step where he paused and delivered a ceremonious bow to the disheveled individual who was picking himself up from the sunbaked clay sidewalk of Altamira.

"Ze señor Americano, he has not paid for hees drunk for two days. He shall now have ze unhappiness to become sober," he said with exaggerated courtesy, whereupon he disappeared behind the swinging doors once more.

As for Danny, he regained his feet by degrees and, maintaining his uncertain balance with no little effort, stood leering at the now vacant doorway by which he had made his forced exit, and the expression on his puffy and unshaven face was that of a man who after a lapse of five minutes tries to connect two ends of a conversation and recall just how much of it he had missed.

Danny was not quite certain just what had precipitated the recent cataclysmic upheaval and he was for going back and asking questions. But because his teetering form had swayed so far in one direction that it was impossible for him to regain the perpendicular he turned completely around instead and with a peculiar left-footed scuffle made his way across the street to a wooden quay, his head wabbling from side to side with every lurch of his body.

Danny Carroll had been in the tropics less than a week but that was long enough for him to learn that drunk or sober it was always best for any one to investigate the shady side of anything, even a man's character, before intimate association, wherefore he hitched his way around to the north side of a pile of coffee bags on the dock and, preserving his drunken dignity, dusted a place clean on the floor of the pier with his tattered felt hat before he sat down.

Now according to all rules Danny should have fallen asleep immediately and forgotten his troubles, but Danny's troubles annoyed him more when he was drunk than they did when he was sober. Danny went back to his most recent difficulties and sought to piece out just what had befallen him and the reason for it. Slowly the facts began to take form in his muddled intellect, and, by the time he had worked his hand into his trousers pocket and felt its vacancy, he knew the answer.

"Just kickhicked me out 'cause I couldn't pay fer my drink-hicks. An' it's t' only place in this dog-rotten ol' town where they sell Yankee whisk-hic-ky," he muttered dolefully.

Then he reflected on the situation for several minutes before he concluded:

"Well, Danny, it ain't your fuf-hic-fault. You ain't been the same man since you lost Number Nine, and you lost Number Nine because of young Rogers; so it's all Rogers's fault an' that's all there ish to it. —— Rogers's soul, anyway," and the blame for it all being satisfactorily fixed, Danny's head dropped forward on his chest and presently he slept.

DANNY'S downfall dated nearly two decades back. A man of fifty now, he was just slipping into his thirties when Rogers came to the Third Avenue Railway Company. Rogers and Danny were in the same company a single week, but that week proved so crowded with events that at its close Danny found himself one of a busy little group of inmates in the workshop on Blackwell's while young Rogers was seriously contemplating a trip 'most anywhere to recover from the nervous strain of those seven days.

"Watch-'em" Watkins, a shrewd, gray-eyed little man was superintendent of the operating department at the time, and Rogers was one of the half-dozen students from Stevens Institute that the Third Avenue Company hired for the Summer. Watkins was comparatively new with the company, having come from Chicago with a glowing reputation as an economist and an efficiency expert. Danny disliked him thoroughly from the first, and it naturally followed that he felt none too cordial toward Rogers, who acted in the capacity of assistant to the Chicago man.

Watkins had earned his sobriquet from his propensity for straying from his office now and then and observing things along the line and in the shops and yards. It happened on one of these trips that he discovered Danny making a minor repair on Number Nine.

To Watkins Number Nine was one of the hundreds of grimy puffers that crawled up and down the elevated structure, dragging strings of dingy-looking cars from one end of Manhattan Island to the other, but to Danny Number Nine was *the* locomotive of them all. It was his special charge, and the amount of Irish sentiment expended upon it in the way of polishing, oiling, cleaning and otherwise caring for it indicated the deep-seated affection Danny had for the steel-sided thing. Danny cared for it as a groom cares for a charger. He scrubbed and rubbed and polished it from headlight to tender, decorated the interior of the cab with photographs of the immortal Gus Ruhlen, Bob Fitzsimmons and other prize fighters, and actresses who posed for the edification of the public and the benefit of certain brands of cigarets. And of course being generally attentive to Number Nine there was every reason why Danny should nurse it through periods of indisposition and make all minor repairs whenever these were necessary.

But "Watch-'em" Watkins did not approve of this. When repairs were necessary, no matter how trivial they might be, the engine should be sent to the shops and the engineer put in charge of another locomotive; and when he found Danny making these repairs he forthwith sent Rogers to call Danny's attention to rule Number 36 of the Chicago Street Railway Code recently adopted by the Third Avenue company.

Rogers found Danny in the act of adjusting the spring on Number Nine's little brass whistle and in trying to fix the spring and listen to Rogers at the same time Danny scalded his fingers, whereupon he told Rogers and Watkins where they could both go and take the Chicago rules and regulations along with them.

Of course Danny was asked to explain, and since Danny never was given to explaining things lucidly next morning found him running a dinky in the Harlem yards with some one else in charge of Number Nine. This made Danny fighting mad. He was of a mind to run the dinky clean through the yard fence and into the Harlem River just to show his contempt for Rogers and Watkins, but he didn't. Instead he spent the morning nursing a grudge and jerking the old coaches about the yard with enough vengeance to shake half of the bolts from their poor jaded bodies, and the thoughts that he voiced occasionally to fellow employees were mutinous in character and sounded very much like those of a walking delegate eager to start something.

But somehow Danny's strike talk got to the ears of "Watch-'em" Watkins and the following day—behold! a begrimed pair of overalls and a jumper were neatly folded on the locker room bench and on top was a terse statement of Danny's time for the week with a "pay to bearer" slip attached. Danny was fired and already some one else possessed his locker.

Danny tried to take the matter to Watkins, but the best he could do was to find Rogers. He argued with Rogers to some length and, perhaps, if a policeman had not rapped Danny on the head by way of breaking an eloquent grip he maintained of Rogers's throat, the youth might have been convinced of the force of his statements.

TEN days on Blackwell's Island made Danny's wrath almost unhuman, but for some strange reason, it was the innocent student and not Watkins toward whom Danny felt bitterest. The erstwhile engineer lapsed into the vernacular, as he did about every other word he spoke, and called Rogers a "sucker" and of all the possible ways he conjured up of getting even none seemed quite brutal enough to suit him.

The day Danny set foot on Manhattan after his fortnight of disciplining, an incident occurred which pained and crushed him far more than the ten days stay in the workhouse. On his way up Fifty-second Street from Blackwell's Island Ferry he crossed Third Avenue. The rumble of an elevated train coming to a halt at the station made him look up involuntarily and there was Number Nine puffing impatiently and waiting the signal of the alien hand at her throttle.

The shock staggered Danny to such an extent that he had to seek a bracer in the saloon on the corner. In truth he found he needed several bracers, for the more whisky he consumed the more troublesome the incident appeared.

That was the beginning of an almost perpetual drunk for Danny. Rare indeed were the intervals of sobriety. They occurred only when his last cent had been spent and his credit had been violated in Andy's and the rest of the Bowery oases.

But through it all Danny never forgot old Number Nine. Indeed, sometimes he would spend hours in a Third Avenue doorway watching for the engine to pass on the tracks above, and the effects this presence had upon him depended entirely upon the condition he was in at the time. If drunker than usual it was likely to drive him to tearful condolence with himself. Sometimes he would view the old engine in mute admiration, at other times a longing would stir within him to feel his hand upon her throttle, and again it would drive him into red-eyed frenzy toward the "sucker," who had deposed him.

Then came the day when the electrics were introduced on the elevated structure. This was a blow to Danny, for it marked completely the passing of the little locomotives. Indeed, that very week Number Nine made her final run along the Avenue and Danny never saw her after that, even though he did risk arrest by going through the yards in Harlem.

Number Nine and scores of her sturdy companions disappeared like magic. Danny learned that Cuban sugar planters had bought some, that Manchuria harbored others, and that they were being sold singly or in quantitites wherever purchasers could be found.

Life became more purposeless than ever to the erstwhile engineer after that and he drank even heavier, if that were possible. He had long ago joined the heterogeneous horde that slouched up and down the Bowery living by their wits, but all that Danny's wits accomplished for him was little indeed until he fell in with one Sully Sullivan, a sad-eyed, smooth-voiced individual.

One of the misfortunes of this meeting was the fact that Danny was forced to keep sober more often and for longer periods than usual, but the fact that he could wear better clothes, sleep in a better lodging-house and could be absolutely sure of quantities of whisky when his work was finished was compensation enough for this single drawback. Danny became the paw of Sully and along with Lispin' Mary, to all intents and purposes his wife, Danny helped to put through at least one of Sully's shady transactions every week.

Sully's business deals were many and varied, and of a nature unique. By no means the least of them was the sale of defunct business establishments and boarding-houses to widows and others who by dint of hard struggle had managed to lay by five or six hundred dollars against the days when they would no longer be able to earn a living.

These little old-age funds presented golden opportunities for Sully. He located them by watching for funeral processions in the East Side or by inserting glowing want ads in the dailies, and when he found a nest-egg ripe for the sucking he called upon Danny and his consort to help him stage the feast.

Trust Sully to convince even the most

skeptical that $500 could be made to produce an income for life. He knew of any number of prosperous boarding-houses and candy and stationery stores, the stock, good will and thriving patronage of which could be purchased by a shrewd business broker of his ability, and always there was one kept by a wholesome old Irish couple, which could be acquired ridiculously cheap because relatives in Ireland had died and left the present holders well off.

The seed well planted, smooth-voiced Sully would hustle around upper New York or Brooklyn and locate a vacant store. This was stocked with all sorts of catch-penny trifles, cheap stationery and cigars and Danny and Lispin' Mary were put in charge. A few days later the client would be given an opportunity to inspect the store and make note of the thriving business this honest old Irish couple had built up.

The client would even be permitted to remain behind the counter for a day or two and take charge of the business. Of course the sales were alluring, for Sully had any number of friends who were willing to spend his money. Laborers who could not write a line appeared for bottles of ink, pens and stationery, and dozens of children dropped in eager to spend the pennies given them by men who had suddenly become quite generous.

Usually after the deal had progressed thus far it was only a matter of a day or two before the stock, fixtures and good will of the place changed hands and Sully, after collecting his very modest commission, vanished as completely as did Danny and Lispin' Mary.

If it were a rooming-house that interested Sully's client, why of course the broker fitted up a vacant house with odds and ends of furniture and with Danny and Mary in charge the place would be remarkably popular among roomers, although it usually happened that every tenant disappeared about the time the new owner tried to collect her first week's room rent. The good will and furniture of these boarding-houses usually brought more than the candy stores, but then, it required more effort to swing the deal, so in the end it mattered little to Sully which form of business his client was most interested in.

It was one of these rooming-house exploits, however, that severed Danny's connections with Sully and for a time considerably disrupted the smooth-voiced broker's business organization.

Sully was always cautious and covered his trail well in every deal. His cohorts too were usually well known to him, but somehow in his haste to fill up a particularly large furnished-room house in Furman Street he asked several of his regular followers to look up roomers. It happened that a few nights after the house was filled a man was shot over in Manhattan, and in the course of the night the gunman was traced to Sully's latest plant. He was one of the extra roomers.

The appearance of the police at the Furman Street house spread consternation among the twenty-odd lodgers as well as Danny and Lispin' Mary, the proprietors.

With the first word of alarm Danny forsook the house by way of a back window, and a few minutes later he made his appearance on Dock Street, but just as he emerged from an alley the arc light on the corner revealed the form of a bluecoat and Danny scuttled across the street and into a covered dock. The noise he made trying to find a hiding-place behind some packing-cases disturbed the dock watchman, and presently there was a hornets' nest about his ears.

Danny was thoroughly frightened, for lanterns were soon bobbing about the shed like fireflies and it required a great deal of nerve and skill to keep dodging them all and yet not reveal his whereabouts. Soon he found himself hemmed in. He was at the end of the dock and the circle of lights was growing smaller and smaller as the searchers advanced.

Danny wondered whether to drop overboard and take a chance at surviving the cold water or to give himself up. But by the greatest good luck he was not required to do either for a heavy manila hawser hitched to a stanchion on the dock opened a way of escape.

This line led to the deck of a steamer lying at the wharf and Danny seized hold and climbed hand over hand to the ship's rail. Lake a shadow he made his way along the deck until he came to an open hatchway, and a few moments later he was securely tucked away in the well-crowded hold of the steamer.

The first thing Danny asked for when they found him three days later was whisky. He tried his hardest to explain that he was

not an intentional stowaway and he assured the second officer that he would prefer being 'most anywhere except out of sight of land on a steamer that reared and plunged far worse than Danny ever did in his most bibulous moments.

Explanations and the fact that Danny was certain he was dying of seasickness did not interest the officer in the least and the supercargo was put to work with the stokers until the vessel made Altamira, her first port. Here Danny without any ceremony took French leave, nor did the second officer organize a searching party to find him, a fact that Danny observed with satisfaction as he sat in Los Embarcaderos Café smoking a blackened corn-cob pipe and drinking the first whisky he had tasted in more than two weeks.

IF ONE sits in one place long enough in Altamira one is bound to attract attention if it is only the attention of fleas and flies. No ordinary flies were these, but insects of tremendous proportions and gorgeous colorings, and their vicious temperament indicated that the fleas were not of the common order either.

It must have been an unusually large pest of the last-named variety that stirred Danny from his drunken stupor, or perhaps it was a whole family of them, but awakened he was, and abruptly too. He scratched with sudden fierceness until the stinging was allayed. Then the action became purely mechanical, for the blatant strains of a brass band diverted his attention from the occupation.

At the first brazen notes the entire population of Altamira tumbled out of doors and lined the sidewalks of La Calle de Los Embarcaderos cheering lustily as a down-at-the-heel band swung into the thoroughfare, followed by bebraided officers on horseback and a regiment of about three hundred barefooted native soldiers.

Danny struggled to his feet to watch the procession, and then because every one else was cheering he waved his battered hat in the air and emitted a whoop just by way of showing that he bore no malice for his recent harsh treatment.

Danny watched the soldiers until they filed proudly into one of the palm-lined streets that led toward the western quarter of the town. Then he turned his attention toward the swinging doors of Los Embarcaderos Café, for he was tormented by a burning thirst.

Slowly his hands traveled in and out of his pockets in a fruitless search for a coin, and finally when he was quite convinced that he had not the wherewithal for a single drink he sighed deeply and started scuffling his way across the square in the direction the soldiers had gone.

Although Danny had been in Altamira a week he had never before wandered away from the broad street that skirted the quay. Not that he had any particular interest in his present expedition, for his mind was more on his needs for a drink than the direction he was taking.

But presently he began to take account of his surroundings, for just ahead of him at the end of the street was a long, low, dilapidated shed that had once been painted red. In spite of all of the weather marks Danny recognized it as a railroad building.

Dozens of white-clad native soldiers were scurrying in and out of this particular structure and Danny could see a column of smoke rising above the palm-trees just beyond. Also he thought that he could hear the sound of escaping steam.

With more than usual interest he shambled forward and a few moments later he reached the shed in question and just beyond he discovered a single line of haphazard railroad ties supporting well-rusted rails that stretched on into the forest and were lost from sight.

A string of a dozen flat cars and a single railway coach coupled to a tiny and very grimy locomotive waited in the clearing, and, although Danny did not know it at the time, this was the troop train of General Jinotega, leader of the forces of the Constitutionalists, just now in full revolt against the Government of Don Felix Francisco de Proensa y Mendoza, President of the Republic.

Danny did not think much of the train, that is certain, for he grunted contemptuously as he looked at it. But he did give some attention to the smoking locomotive, about which a group of natives were gathered. Evidently something was wrong, for one of the natives was swinging a heavy sledge, at the top of what appeared to be a chisel held by another native. This chisel seemed to be directed at a bolt on the cylinder-head and Danny made a mental prognostication that inside of three more strokes

the engine would have a cracked cylinder-head and there would be several scalded soldiers in the immediate vicinity.

"Huh, t' fools," he grunted, "takin' a sledge t' start a bolt. Why if I had treated old Number Nine like——"

Danny stopped abruptly and stared. The mention of the old engine conjured a vision. No, it wasn't a vision. It was real. He saw old Number Nine before his eyes. There on the rusted tracks being mauled by a swarm of dusky natives was his former charge.

Danny grew red with rage. The metamorphosis was swift. From a shambling individual Danny became a man of action.

"—— it! It is t' old horse, an' them yeller dagoes treatin' her like that! I—I ——I'll—Hi, git out o' that with t' sledge!" he roared as he plunged forward.

Danny elbowed the natives right and left until he could lay hold of the man with the sledge. That amateur mechanic went spinning off in one direction while the man who handled the chisel bowled over several of his companions in his effort to get out of the path of the cyclone.

"You dirty bunch o' whops! What do you think you've got here—a pile-driver? Lammin' it with a sledge-hammer like that! Ain't you got any respect fer an engine? You—you've. Well, for the— Say, you got t' hull —— thing apart. Who did it anyway? Who is the guy what thought he was an engineer?"

Danny surveyed the ground in the vicinity of the locomotive. Wrenches, bolts, nuts, brake-pins, shoes and almost every other detachable part of the engine were scattered about.

"Huh, it's a good thing I came along when I did or—Say, if it wasn't ol' Number Nine herself I'd like to have seen that smart guy with t' sledge bust open the cylinder-head. Then t' bunch of you u'd got scalded fer yer trouble and it— Huh, what's that? I don't speak dago young feller."

A tall, dark-visaged individual with villainous mustache had approached. Danny noted with interest that he was the only one of them all who wore shoes.

"Et es not dago I spik," said the officer, frowning and drawing up his lips, "et es Americano."

"Oh, come again. I didn't git it first," said Danny.

"I say, what for you make a-a-ah *tumulto*, huh? Do you possibly know how to feeks heem?"

"Do I know how to fix it? Do I know how to fix my own locomotive? Well what do you think of that!" exclaimed Danny incredulously.

"Et es not your ah-ah—locomochive. Et es ze locomochive of General Jinotega," corrected the officer.

"Say, young feller, this is *my* engine an' don't you forget it. It's ol' Number Nine —my old Number Nine—what I haven't seen in years. She's mine and there ain't goin' t' be no other guy put his hands onto her from this out—see!" retorted Danny truculently. "And what's more, I'm going t' fix her and fix her right. Who was the amature engineer, huh?"

"Ze what?" queried the officer.

"The engineer—the feller what run her—the—the driver."

"Oh, oh, yes. Heem," said the native, pointing to the man with the sledge.

"Him—well, he's fired. Pay him off and kick him out. Don't want to see his yeller face around here again," said Danny laconically. Then, as he began to take off his tattered coat, he continued, "Now I'm goin' t' fix t' old horse."

"You will feeks heem. Good! How long it will take?" demanded the officer eagerly.

"Oh, I'll have her running to-morrow."

"To-morrow! No, no! To-day! Now! General Jinotega he needs the soldiers! The revolution! We must get the soldiers to Nueva Morelos."

"Aw t' —— with t' revolution. Let it wait. Ol' Number Nine has got to be fixed first. Poor old devil! She's been without a civilized friend fer years, an' I'm goin' to nurse her into shape again. Say, how far is this here place where General what's-his-name is?"

"Seventy miles over there," said the officer, pointing toward the mountains.

"Yes! Huh, I got some little railroad then, ain't I? Well, say I'll be good to you, young feller. If you'll chase your gang back t' town I'll git right to work an' by daylight to-morrow, we'll be on our way. Now, now, don't give me any back talk—that's all there is to it. Can't be done any quicker. T' old snorter is all shook t' pieces. We'll be lucky if we git there at all, 'cause there may be some parts missing. Now clear out all of you and let me alone,"

said Danny with finality, and the officer after a lingering look at the mess of locomotive parts on the ground shrugged his shoulders and walked off. Ten minutes later the brass band started to blare once more and the tatterdemalions marched back to town leaving Danny alone with his iron-sided foundling.

But Danny did not bend to his task immediately. He was too full of sentiment for that. He climbed into the cab and sat on the bench once more and with his hand upon the throttle peered out of the square window along the line of rusted rails, and presently he was lost in revery.

The coconut-palm and banana trees on either side of the right of way became tenements of brick and stone. There were two tracks instead of one, and Danny was peering down the vista to where the golden dome of the World Building reared aloft against a turquoise sky. It was early morning and old Number Nine was bowling along at her best, dragging a string of dirty red cars City-Hallwards.

The clang and the rattle of the city's traffic mingled with the puffing of the old engine was music to Danny's ears and the smell of grease and coal gas, blended with the alliaceous odors of the lower East Side and Chinatown, were as perfume to his hungry soul.

For half an hour he lingered on the leather seat while ghosts of the old days trooped through his memory. There was McCafferty, the red-headed lad who fired for him. Danny had not seen him since. And there was Gus Newton, engineer of No. 105, who used to toot the whistle every time he passed the corner of Fifty-sixth Street. No one ever knew why he blew this signal until the day he married. He recalled Patsy Callahan, who went stark mad after his engine hit and killed a track-walker, and Dave Weeks who was crushed between two cars and remained a hopeless cripple for years. Then there was the gang of smudgy face cleaners in the round-house and the gang of shop hands. They were all good fellows too.

Danny shook himself and smiled ruefully.

"Gee whiz! It's a long time since they took her away from me, an' what a lot has happened to me! I—I—well, I sort of took a slide I guess. Came darned near bein' scrapped. An' they ain't been no easy years for you ol' girl either, have they? I kind-a thought you might be on t' scrap-heap, too, by this time. But —— it, we ain't there yet, an' we ain't goin' to be there for a long time, neither," he said with emphasis.

Then he climbed down out of the cab and walked slowly around the locomotive, peering at her iron vitals while testing the gearing here and tightening a bolt there. Finally he stood off and surveyed her as a whole.

"Hang it," he muttered, "to tell the truth you look like the devil. But I'm goin' to fix you up—goin' to make you over new. I'll fix your kickers and polish you up in fine shape, if it's the last thing I do. I don't know who this General Jingle-Jingle is, who owns you, but it's a cinch he needs a first-class engineer, and I'm the boy what takes the job from now on you can bet."

Number Nine had been converted into a wood-burning engine long ago and the fire that had been roaring in her fire-box when Danny first arrived had almost gone out.

Danny drew the ashes and blew off the head of steam. Then with a big wrench in one hand and a bundle of cotton waste in the other he started to work. Never had he toiled harder or with more enthusiasm. Nuts and bolts were readjusted, rusted parts cleaned and oiled and the scattered sections all replaced.

The sun dropped behind the distant blue hills and a purple mist gathered in the valleys while Danny labored, but he found an old brass oil-torch in the tool-box in the cab, and by its uncertain yellow flicker he worked far into the night.

Some time in the early morning hours he paused and rested a little on the floor of the cab, but sunup saw him at it again, and by the time the brass notes of the native band sounded from the direction of Altamira, Number Nine stood trembling under one hundred pounds of steam, eager to be unleashed.

"Aw-right Colonel," said Danny with a grin, when the young officer approached. "Ol' Number Nine's ready an' fit's a fiddle."

"Oh, magnificent!" exclaimed he of the black mustache. "It es ze grand service to ze Revolution you have done, señor. Come, we'll have ze drink together," and from his hip pocket he extracted a flask of no mean dimensions.

Dannny's eyes grew larger and his hand went out, but he checked the motion abruptly and drew himself up.

"No—no! Not on your life. I'm an engineer with responsibilities, young feller. No, sir, I ain't a drinkin' man no more."

"No!" exclaimed the officer, raising his eyebrows.

"No!" answered Danny with finality; then he added: "but say, you kin give your cook my order for breakfast. I ain't had anything t' eat since yesterday morning, an' say, I want one of your men to fire for me. That big guy over there with the shoulders —send him over will you?"

"Wiz pleasure," assured the officer as he hurried away.

OLD Number Nine made the run to Nueva Morelos after a fashion, although so far as the soldiers were concerned the trip was accomplished in record time. Danny was swearing mad when his train drew in at the red shed that marked the terminal of the road and he discovered that it had taken him the greater part of six hours to complete the seventy miles between the coast and the headquarters city of the revolutionists.

"Six hours! Huh, that's an insult t' ol' Number Nine. But she might just as well try to run on cobblestones as that roadbed," he thundered when he climbed down from his cab and came face to face with the young officer.

"Señor, do not say so. Zis is ze grand trip! Sometimes it takes so much as all day to do et and sometimes et is only half done in a day an' ze soldiers, heem mus' walk ze rest."

"Well that right-o'-way is goin' to have attention in darned quick order if I'm going to be president of this road, which I am," said Danny. Then he added: "Say, where is this General what's-his-name. I want to talk business with him."

"General Jinotega—he es now wiz hees troops in ze mountains. I go to heem now. I shall also spik with heem of our loyal locomochive man what we have found. He will be pleased you should serve ze Revolution. I will send what we shall spik to you."

The leader of the faction in revolt did not have a great deal to say to Danny, but what he did say was terse and to the point, and communicated in a letter brought to him two days later by messenger. Danny was assured that the acquisition of a competent engineer meant a great deal to the cause, for it was upon this stretch of tracks that the success of the Revolution depended. The line connected with the country's biggest port and provided the only available route over which supplies and ammunition could be transported from the outside world to Nueva Morelos.

Danny sensed his importance immediately and forthwith appointed himself superintendent, president, vice-president, conductor, engineer and traffic manager of the entire system, which comprised ninety miles of tracks, counting a short spur to Puerto Barrios, a dozen flat cars, two passenger coaches, a hand-car and Number Nine.

Fully installed as president, Danny set about to rebuild his road and repair his rolling stock. With a gang of soldiers and all the building material he could lay hands on he started out to repair the road-bed.

The right of way reminded Danny a great deal of his former self. It reached its destination, the coast, almost exactly as he used to travel the Bowery or Third Avenue. That is, it never seemed at all certain of its direction. It wandered here and there, as if seeking to avoid, by a wide margin, any objects that might prove at all liable to resist its progress.

Indeed, at one point, down in the foothills near the coast, the tracks ran for four miles along the banks of the treacherous Rio Negro until they found a place where a little wooden bridge carried them safely across. Then to avoid a hill the tracks returned four miles on the opposite side thus forming an eight-mile "U" to traverse a single mile of its journey toward Altamira.

It was just above the bend in this horseshoe of tracks that the spur line to Puerto Barrios struck out to the southeast. The town was only fifteen miles from the junction, yet by way of the coast it was nearly a hundred miles from Altamira. This coast line formed the irregular base of the triangle of territory controlled by the Constitutionalists, while the apex was far up in the mountains, sixty-odd miles west of the headquarters city, Nueva Morelos. Out there three divisions of raggedy, pajama-clad soldiers were hammering away with machine guns and rifles, trying to change the triangle into a parallelogram with the Pacific Ocean the westerly extreme. They had been at it for months now but other raggedy soldiers fighting for Mendoza had contrived to make the whole thing a rather stubborn geometrical problem.

Traffic conditions of the line were more or less uncertain during the period of reconstruction, but that made little difference, for there was practically no freight to speak of and what travelers came and left the few Indian villages along the line preferred to journey on foot or by burro.

After the road-bed had been rehabilitated, as it were, Danny as traffic manager spent several evenings in his office in the red shed terminal at Nueva Morelos and worked out a traffic schedule. Then as freight agent and passenger agent he worked out a tariff schedule too, each of which he inked on to a large chart which he later hung in a conspicuous place on his office wall.

Moreover these schedules were adhered to under any and all conditions. Old Number Nine and her flat cars made a round trip to Altamira every day, and twice a week switched at the spur track and ran down to Puerto Barrios and back.

To be sure, the movement of troops, supplies and ammunition contributed practically all the business of the road, but that was not enough for Danny. After the war it would be time enough to drum up a freight and passenger business of another nature. As it was, no one ever bothered him. Fuel was cheap and he took orders from no one save General Jinotega, who occasionally sent him directions about the transportation of supplies and soldiers. Taking it all in all Danny was having the time of his life and he was enjoying every moment of it.

But there came a day when clouds gathered on the horizon for Danny, and for the first time he began to be thoroughly interested in the activities of the raggedy brown soldiers in the hills. General Jinotega's agents in the States had not been able to ship ammunition to him as fast as his men were using it up. In truth Danny's train had met two steamers from Galveston and returned each time without a load of freight. To make matters worse the agents of the Felicistas had been shipping great quantities of war stores from Frisco down the Pacific coast and consequently the Mendoza soldiers had been able to make twice as much smoke and noise up there in the hills. Under such conditions, of course, it was highly prudent of Jinotega's troops to give ground.

Conditions beyond Nueva Morelos were becoming quite serious. Plantation owners were leaving their estates and coming into the city. German and American miners were quitting the mountains and taking refuge in the stronghold of the revolutionists.

Reports from the hills kept getting worse and worse. The Federals were advancing. The rebels were giving ground. They were now only twenty miles from the city. Next day they were but ten miles away. Two days later the rattle of musketry and the drone of the machine guns could be heard from the plaza of Nueva Morelos.

Danny had been too busy running his train to the coast in hopes of getting the much-needed freight to pay attention to conditions in the city itself, but when one morning a dozen tourists and American mine owners applied at his office for accommodations to Altamira, Danny opened his eyes. For the first time in its history Danny's railroad was about to do legitimate passenger business.

Of course Danny carried them to the coast for a price. The rate at first was based on his original schedule, but when it became necessary to use the two coaches instead of one his charges soared skyward.

Danny's road was making more money than ever before, but his sudden prosperity worried him. What if the Federals should force Jinotega's soldiers back from Nueva Morelos? If they should take the city itself, what would become of his railroad? Danny couldn't answer these questions.

Thereafter he kept his ears open for reports from the front. Indeed he followed the fluctuations of Jinotega's fortunes almost as closely as did the old general himself. And during the course of the next few days he learned many things of a disturbing nature, among them the fact that ammunition was so badly needed that the revolutionists were being driven back on every front. Worst of all, detachments of Felicistas were making dents all along both sides of the Jinotega triangle in an effort to cut off communication with the coast or possibly capture Altamira.

Danny grew visibly worried. He applied to his little friend of the mustachios for additional soldiers and a machine gun to guard his train, and he even took to wearing an automatic in his hip pocket.

The exodus of tourists and natives continued, too. Daily a line formed outside of Danny's shed awaiting the time for old

Number Nine to start coastward, and daily Danny collected their coins and gave them a written pass which was taken up at the end of the run.

The president of the Altamira, Nueva Morelos, Puerto Barrios Railroad, as Danny chose to call his line, was indeed a busy man. Several times the rush of passengers was so great that old Number Nine even attempted two trips to the coast on the same day. On these occasions she came panting home at midnight or later and Danny, after eighteen hours at the throttle, would stumble down from the cab and drag himself across the terminal siding to the little red shanty, which served the double purpose of office and lodging-house. Here he would throw himself onto his cot and sleep until the sun awoke him the next morning.

It was after one of these days of a double run, while Danny was trying to find his way toward his abode through darkness that seemed doubly heavy because he had just extinguished the engine's smoking headlight, that he collided with a stranger. The collision brought forth an apology in Spanish and a sentence that Danny could not translate, which being the case the engineer muttered something about "the —— dagoes" and proceeded on his way. But in answer, out of the darkness came a sentence in English:

"Pardon me, but I am not one of the —— dagoes. I'm merely looking for the railroad station."

"Huh," said Danny, "this ain't no hour t' be looking for t' railroad station. What do you want? I'm t' whole railroad."

"Oh, then you're Danny Carroll," said the stranger.

"I'm Danny. Wait until I light a lamp and I'll talk it over with you," said Danny as he fumbled with the latch of his office door. Presently he found his way in and, locating a match, rubbed it along the top of the table until it sputtered and revealed a railroad lantern close at hand. He applied the match and turning faced the stranger in the doorway.

For a moment he was transfixed. Then he grinned sheepishly and rubbed his eyes.

"Y'know, your face got me first. Guess it was only because I'm tired though. I could ha' swore yuh was Rogers but ——"

"My name is Rogers. Well, by George, if it isn't the same Danny Carroll who was an engineer on the Third Avenue road," said the stranger and, holding out his hand, advanced toward Danny.

Something tightened in Danny's throat. He could feel the blood mounting to his face. His fists clenched and he glared at the extended hand. The next instant, however, his attitude changed and once more a grin formed on his face.

"Ho, ho, so you're caught in here with the rest of the Americans. You want me to take you to t' coast, eh? Want old Number Nine to haul you to tidewater with me in t' cab. What a chance you've got young feller," he gloated.

The smile left Rogers's face. For a few moments he was puzzled, and as he stood there in the flicker of the smoking railroad lantern, Danny, in spite of his wrath, could not help admiring him. He was tall and clean-cut with a picturesque felt hat, khaki shirt opened at the throat, and khaki trousers tucked into the top of the high leather shoes that stamped him immediately as an engineer.

"Why, look here, Danny, I don't quite understand," he remonstrated.

"Oh, don't you—you don't understand all the dirty work back there in the old days? You don't understand gettin' me fired off of Number Nine and gettin' me kicked clean off the road, do you? I'll admit you don't know all that followed. You don't know how I did time in the workhouse, and how I took to drinkin', and how I went all to hell; how the sight of ol' Number Nine with some one else in her cab made me a booze-fighter and drove me to associatin' with the rats and the scum o' the earth. Why, I even helped rob widows and orphans, just for whisky money. No, I know you don't understand all that, but ——"

A knowing smile come over the face of the young engineer.

"Poor old Danny! You sure did get it rough didn't you? But don't blame it all on me Danny; don't blame it all on me. Just call it fate and let it go at that, and then we'll have a drink together. Here's a pint of the best stuff on the Isthmus," said Rogers producing a flask and offering it to the engineer.

For a moment Danny stared at the man in khaki, as if uncertain just what to do next. The muscles in his arms tightened, blood mounted to his wrinkled cheeks and the cords in his neck stood out. It was with the utmost effort that the old man re-

strained himself. Rogers saw his mistake and was on the defense immediately.

But Danny did not spring. He knew that he was no longer a match for the man before him, and, instead of risking a struggle, he stepped back and drew the automatic from his hip pocket.

"—— your skin!" he roared. "I got a good mind to lay you out for that insult. You git out of here and git quick. I'm boss o' this road, I am, and you wouldn't git to the coast on it if you was dyin'. An' nothin' on earth could make me take you there, not even a letter from ol' General Jinotega hisself, and he's the only man I take orders from. Now git! Go on back to your mine or whatever you got down here, and I hope that bunch o' dago cut-throats up there in the hills gits you and does the job I ain't got the nerve to do right now."

And Rogers, pale in spite of his sun-tan, backed discreetly out of the door and was lost in the darkness.

DANNY did not sleep much that night. From beyond the city came the rattle of machine-gun and rifle fire, and the occasional boom of field guns, all during the hours of darkness. The fighting was getting nearer and nearer to the headquarters of the revolutionists and it worried Danny a great deal. He knew how short the ammunition supply must be, for it had been days and days since a steamer had left anything at the quay in Altamira.

Danny wondered how long the rebels could continue, and he wondered, too, what would become of him and his little road when the triangle was finally smashed and the Constitutionalists were in full retreat.

But dawn brought news that kept the old engineer's mind from such disquieting speculation. One of the little brown soldiers rushed into Danny's shanty at daybreak with a message that word had been received by telephone from Altamira that a steamer was headed in. Danny was asked to make all haste in getting his train to the coast, for it was barely possible that the steamer carried the much-needed ammunition and supplies that General Jinotega had been hoping for.

Danny's hopes were just as fervent when he read the message, and almost before the sleepy garrison of guards came tumbling out of the shed in which they were quartered he had revived the glowing embers of last night's fire in old Number Nine, and had the little engine's steam-gage ticking.

On all sides of the city the battle was under way, and far down both sides of the triangle Danny could hear the pop-popping of skirmishers. The Felicistas were trying to extend their lines toward the coast and cut in upon the railroad, Danny knew. He wondered how many brown men from the west coast had been able to work their way through the forests on either side of the track.

Soon old Number Nine was ready, and with much puff-puffing the little engine and its rattling string of flat cars and raggedy-tag body-guard, started coastward. Danny had two natives in the cab to fire for him, and fire they did.

The engine's iron sides almost bulged under the pressure of steam Danny crowded into her, and with down grades most of the way she started on a record-breaking trip for the coast. Danny did not stop for anything. His train took curve after curve at a perilous speed and the startled soldiers were obliged to lie flat on the floors of the cars to keep from being snapped off at each turn.

Number Nine made a glorious run. Danny was proud of her. She covered the seventy miles in a little more than three hours, and when the train rumbled into the terminal at Altamira the native guard breathed a sigh of relief and surreptitiously crossed themselves.

Danny noted with satisfaction that the steamer was in. He could see her alongside of the quay at the end of the palm-lined street with a busy army of stevedores swarming about her, heaping up great pyramids of boxes and crates containing the rebels' ammunition.

"Git your dagoes busy," said Danny to the officer in charge of the guard, "git 'em busy, for this train starts back inside of two hours, and she'll have a full load of ammunition, or dead dagoes, mark my word. You got to work, d'ye hear me; you got to work t' save this revolution, and —— it, if I don't forgit my dignity as president of this here road and work right along with you."

Work they did. Every one in Altamira turned out to help them, too, and soon there was a sweating, struggling line of natives, with hand trucks and every other form of carry-all, hustling boxes of arms and ammunition from the dock to the railroad terminal.

Old Number Nine was not ready to return in two hours as Danny had predicted. But by high noon every flat car was piled to the limit with the freight the steamer had brought in, and at twelve-ten, by the big silver watch of the railroad president, the little engine gave a preliminary screech of her shrill whistle, and, amid the farewell cheers of the natives, snorted forward. It was a mighty load for the veteran of the Third Avenue Railroad to handle and Danny knew it, but he knew, too, that old Number Nine could do a lot more under his direction than the little iron horse was meant for.

Up the first grade the train struggled, slowly at first, for Danny did not care to strain anything at this important moment.

The second grade was taken a little faster, and by the time Number Nine was ten miles out of Altamira she was traveling at no mean speed in spite of her load, for Danny was not troubled with block signals, stations or anything else on his line. Soon they were well up in the hills and worming their way across one valley after another. And, as they approached Nueva Morelos, above the coughing of the engine and the ratteldy-clank of the flat cars, Danny detected the sound of battle.

"Holy smoke, they're doin' things up there! Those yellow devils have worked down on this side of the city mighty far. I wonder how near they've come to the railroad tracks, —— 'em."

The native soldiers back there on the flat cars heard the battle too, and began to form parapets of boxes and crates, and the machine gun, mounted on top of the tender, back of Danny, was manned and cleared for action. And Danny, by way of being prepared for anything, took his automatic out of his hip pocket and laid it on the leather-cushioned bench beside him.

On chugged old Number Nine. The rattle of firing grew nearer and sharper.

In the woods on the right side of the tracks and well up on the hillside Danny saw puffs of smoke. These puffs grew more numerous as the train forged on, and once they came all the way down into the valley and within a quarter of a mile of the tracks. Danny heard the *ping-g-g*, of a bullet as it ricocheted from the top of the boiler of the engine. Another thumped through the cab, right where Gus Ruhlen's picture used to be, and clipped an oil cock from the engine.

"The son-of-a-gun," said Danny, as he ducked.

The machine gun on the tender started firing then, but ceased presently, when Danny threw a chunk of wood at the gunner.

"Don't do that, you fool. Wait until there is something to hit. You'll get plenty of things to shoot at in a minute," roared Danny.

And he was right. The battle line did not go back upon the hillside again. Instead, it pressed even nearer to the tracks.

The din grew louder. The jungle seemed full of men. Danny could see them dodging from tree to tree, or hacking their way through the undergrowth with their machetes, but for the life of him he did not know which were revolutionists and which were the Federals. They all looked alike, with their raggedy cotton pajamas and their big straw hats. He did know, however, that the rebels were between him and the Felicistas, and he made the best of it by crowding into Number Nine every ounce of steam that she would hold.

But presently, as they rounded a bend in the road, hell broke loose. The Federals charged in a mad effort to capture the railroad tracks and tear them up. All along the right of way was a swaying, cursing, shrieking, blood-smeared mob.

The din of it all was deafening. Machetes whirled everywhere. The machine gun on the tender opened up in earnest then for the Felicistas swarmed out of the forest as thick as flies. Up the low embankment they rushed, charging the horde of rebels who fought and shrieked along the trackside.

Had they torn up the rails? Danny could not see for the mass of men that pitched and swayed in front of him. But rails or no rails old Number Nine rolled forward. Like a Juggernaut the iron-sided charger plunged toward the blood-mad mob, and the next instant she was plowing her way through a tide of human animals.

Danny looked out upon a sea of ugly, rage-distorted faces. Bullets thumped the cab everywhere. Danny was hit more than once. He knew it for he felt a sting in his chest, and another in his shoulder But he cursed and fought and drove his engine onward.

They tried to board the train. One climbed part way up the steps of the cab and Danny's fireman crushed his skull with a stick of fire-wood. Another leaped for the cab window and clung on as the train rushed by, but Danny shot him and shuddered at the look of horror on his face as he dropped backward into the crush.

Number Nine still rolled forward, and Danny, looking out ahead, saw an unending sea of faces. He was growing tired now, and weak too. Something was wrong with his chest. It pained him and his shirt was wet. His head whirled, and he knew that his hand on the throttle was unsteady. But still the mob pressed in about the engine. And there were others, hundreds of them, yes, thousands of them, rushing down the track toward him, firing and shouting and waving their battered hats as they ran.

But for some strange reason this on coming mob parted and cheered loudly as Number Nine rushed by. Danny wondered why. They were afraid of him, curse them! They were afraid of him and old Number Nine. That was the reason. How he hated those dagoes! He would have killed a couple of them just for the pleasure it would give him, only his revolver was empty.

Then suddenly something else attracted his attention. Off on the hills sounded the boom of a cannon, then another and another. Danny saw a puff of smoke up the tracks, and a shower of dirt where the shell burst against the embankment. He saw another puff still closer, and then an explosion just in front of the engine. He noted with hazy eyes that old Number Nine was minus her smoke-stack. It all seemed very strange to him.

"The yellow devils, they've spoiled——"

There was another explosion. It felt to Danny as if it happend right under his feet. Old Number Nine seemed to rise up on its hind wheels and claw the air. Danny felt himself gliding giddily through space. Then utter darkness followed.

AS NEAR as Danny could estimate it he had been in the hospital at Nueva Morelos two whole months before he had temerity to try his legs once more, and on that same day, strangely enough, came a messenger in a bright-red touring car, with a letter from President Jinotega congratulating him upon his recovery and assuring him that his presence at the executive residence would be welcomed if he felt capable of the visit.

The automobile whisked Danny through the streets of Nueva Morelos faster than old Number Nine had ever traveled in her most ambitious days, and in five minutes he was being bowled across the Plaza toward the executive building. But there was something strange about the appearance of the big public square to Danny. The bandstand had disappeared, and the whole place had been remade. And the big monument in the center; that was quite new. Danny shaded the sun from his eyes and stared at it. Then he gasped, and stared again.

"It's—it's—why, it's ol' Number Nine! Stop—stop! Wait a minute, you fool!" he shouted, pounding the chauffeur on the back.

In obedience, the big car was brought to a halt, and Danny, on feeble legs and with a lump in his throat as big as an alligator pear, climbed out and tottered across the square.

And there before him on a huge granite block, with a big official-looking bronze tablet under it, stood Number Nine. Her smoke-stack was gone and a great gaping hole in her steel side showed where the one-pounder had burst. The cab was riddled to splinters, too, and one of her big driving-wheels was missing, but it was Number Nine sure enough. Danny gazed up at her proudly, and tears came to his eyes.

"Well, old girl, you went through hell, and even then you wouldn't let 'em scrap you, would you, you old darlin'?" Then, looking longingly at the bronze tablet he added, "And for once in my life I wish I was born a dago."

A few moments later Danny was being ushered into the executive building. The swarthy little gray-haired general came forward to greet him.

"Ah, señor, it is with pleasure I meet for the first time face to face, the man who saved our cause. Today, because of you, Señor Carroll, our gallant soldiers have made Mendoza the tyrant flee the country. I am profound in my appreciation."

"Aw, never mind me," said Danny, struggling hard to speak naturally, "but I sure am proud of the way you treated ol' Number Nine. Poor old girl, she got an awful beatin'."

"Ah, señor, it was a noble thought," said the general helping Danny to a chair. "I

too am proud of the idea, but I am not reponsible. It is the thought of my chief of staff. We have many plans together, he and I. We soon shall build railroads across the Isthmus, and you, he says, shall be in charge, Señor Carroll. You have never met my chief of staff? No? An American, señor, and a most proficient engineer. You shall meet him. Wait."

The general pressed a button, and presently the door opened and admitted a tall, clean-cut young man clad in khaki and wearing the high leather shoes of an engineer. Danny gasped and swallowed hard.

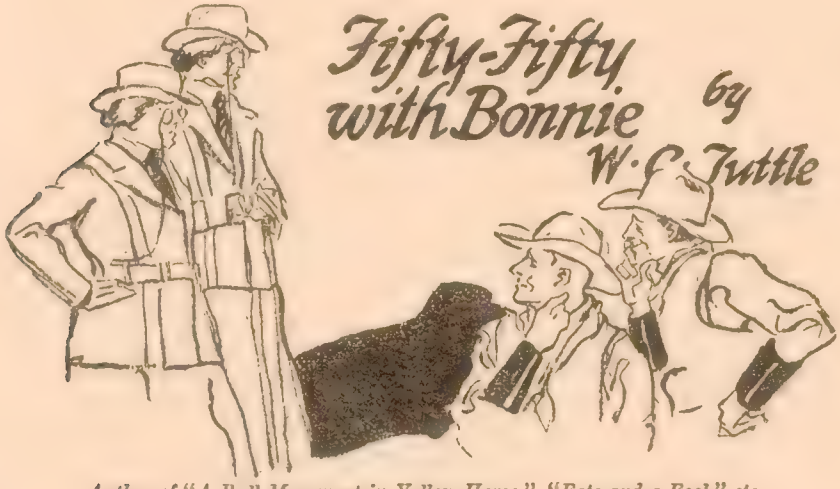
"Rogers!" he exclaimed.

And Rogers smilingly extended his hand toward the bewildered engineer.

"You—you—well I'll be hanged!" was all Danny could stammer as he grasped the young man's hand.

"Never mind. I understand," said Rogers. "I have a great deal of admiration and respect for you, Danny. A lot depended upon getting that ammunition here on time and I intended to go down to the coast with you that night. But I changed my mind when I found out how you felt about it. I concluded mighty quickly that you could bring it through if any one could," said the young engineer with a grin.

And Danny smiled sheepishly at certain recollections.



Author of "A Bull Movement in Yellow Horse," "Fate and a Fool," etc

MY BONNIE-E-E lies over th' ocean. My Bonnie-e-e lies over th' sea. My Bonnie-e-e lies o-ver th'—" wailed Chuck Warner in a minor key, turning his long nose toward the blue sky, and keeping a silent accompaniment to his vocal gyrations by wiggling his ears.

"Here," interrupted the postmaster of Curlew, handing Chuck a letter. "When yuh gits over feelin' so bad yuh might put this in yore pocket and hand it to Johnny Myers as yuh rides past th' Triangle ranch."

Chuck reached for the letter, stuffed it into his vest pocket and resumed his lamentations to some one to "Bring ba-a-ack, bring ba-a-ack, o-o-oh, bring back my Bonnie-e-e to me-e-e-e."

Chuck had the longest face and the shortest legs west of Bismarck. His claims to notoriety consisted of complete control of his ear muscles, an ability to ride anything that ever wore hair, the memory of a snowshoe rabbit and the conscience of a Flathead half-breed. Chuck drew an intermittent salary from Hank Padden, owner of the Seven-A cattle outfit. When he wasn't engaged in drawing a salary from Hank, he was spending what he had already drawn, on wine and song. Women were a minus quantity with Chuck; that is, women who figure with wine and song. His favorite song—sober or not—has been mentioned at the beginning of this tale.

Hank Padden was the owner of the Seven-A and a grouch against women. It

was rumored that at one time Hank had been jilted by a Piegan squaw, and if that isn't the height of humiliation there ain't no such animile.

Also Hank harbored the worst misfit bunch of cow-punchers that ever jingled a spur. Outside of Chuck, he had Weinie Lopp, Zeb Crandall, Hen Peck—christened Gilliland—Mort Blackwell and Swede Johnson.

Leaving Chuck out of the group your eye naturally gravitates toward Swede Johnson. Swede is six feet five in his boots, with a head the shape and size of a croquet ball, and his boots admit twelve sizes. His hat is a 6½ and he draws it up a little with a snakeskin band. Swede was not a hero and did not look like a viking.

This narrative starts with Chuck and Weinie Lopp sitting on the depot steps at Curlew, cussing the train 'cause it wasn't on time.

"If I hadn't promised th' ol' man before he left that I'd see that this freight got hauled up to th' ranch right away, I'd go some place where it's cool and—dog-gone, I shore don't admire to ride in uh lumber wagon a-tall. That ranch is goin' to th' dogs."

"Uh-huh," agreed Weinie. "I'm gittin' tired of th' Seven-A myself."

"Aw, th' ranch is all right," defended Chuck. "It's th' danged lonesomeness that gits under my hide. It shore needs wakin' or it will pass out from dry rot. Here th' ol' man goes gallivantin' over to Helena and leaves Swede in charge of th' ranch. Swede! Every time he takes off his hat I wants to play uh combination shot. He shore does carry th' first cousin to uh pool ball on top of his neck. Here comes th' train.'

The train pulled in and off hopped two women. As a team they didn't match up at all. One of them was short and fat and the other favored a lodge-pole. Not tall and willowy but tall and stiff. They were both wearing tan outing suits, straw hats and glasses, with enough black cord fastened thereto to hang a horse thief.

They scanned the horizon and then engaged the agent in conversation for a minute. He listened and then pointed over at Chuck and Weinie. The two women walked over and made a minute inspection of the two punchers.

"Have you a conveyance?" asked the tall one.

Chuck looked at Weinie and then back at the women.

"We're both uh li'l hard uh hearin' ma'am. What yuh say?"

"I awsked you if you had a conveyance."

"She awsk—" began Weinie. "Oh, shore. You means uh way to git there without wearin' out yore shoes."

"Certainly!" she snapped. "The manager must have told you."

"The manager?" wonders Chuck, aloud. "Oh, yes—shore—huh—yes'm."

"How far is it?" asked the fat one.

"Nobody knows," replied Chuck confidentially. "Th' ol' timers says that it ain't——"

"Your conveyance is near at hand?" interrupts the tall one.

"I'd tell uh man," replied Weinie, "it's right behind th' station. You show 'em, Chuck, while I asks about that freight."

The freight had not arrived, and as Weinie comes out of the depot doors he meets Chuck coming in.

"Did yuh show 'em th' con-vey-ance?" laughed Weinie.

Chuck grinned back and yelled at the agent—"Does all these trunks belong to them females?"

"What do you care?" asked Weinie.

"They wants to take 'em along. Dog-gone, I reckon we'll have uh load after all."

"Jist about what's th' idea, Chuck. Who's goin' to take 'em along and where?"

"Search me, Weinie. I shows 'em th' conveyance and they eases themselves into it and yells for th' trunks."

"Didn't they say where they're a-goin'?"

"Not a say. They awsked me if there were any cowboys on th' farm, and also if th' Injuns ever got hostile. I tells 'em that I never seen uh cowboy and that all Injuns is hostile. What do yuh reckon we've corraled, Weinie?"

Weinie rolled a smoke and leaned thoughtfully against the depot wall. He snapped the half-smoked cigaret out over the tracks and shook his head.

"I don't know, Chuck. When uh female attaches herself to yuh thataway it ain't good manners to question her motives. Jist lay fer uh chance and pass her on. Let's take 'em out and sic 'em on Swede. Th' Seven-A needs uh woman's ministerin' hand, Chuck. Six trunks! By cripes, this ain't no fleetin' visit they're makin'. It's uh good thing we didn't come hossback."

"My man," interrupted a harsh voice, and the tall woman stood at the corner of the building, with hands on her hips and an outlaw gleam in her eye. "Load those trunks!"

"Yes'm," replied Chuck, removing his hat. "We'll jist——"

"Don't wiggle your ears that way!" she snaps. "One would think that you belonged to the lower order of animals."

"Not only one, ma'am," agreed Weinie. "You and me both. I allus figure that uh human bein' what can wiggle his ears thataway is ——"

"Aw!"—— snaps Chuck. "Git hold of that trunk!"

"Your language," remarked the woman, "is also——"

But Chuck had a trunk on his back and was waddling around the corner, and she shut her lips and followed.

"THAT'S her," stated Weinie, pointing with his whip at the ranch buildings of the Seven-A. The main building had originally been a one-story, square structure, but additional rooms had been added until it resembled a Maltese cross. Unpainted and weather-worn but with a wide veranda running around the front, it was at least habitable. Further down the slope stood the bunk-house and off to the east was the long rambling stable and corrals.

"Rawther primitive," remarked the fleshy member. "I suppose that preparations have been made for our arrival."

"Yes, indeed," added the tall one. "That was all understood in case I wrote accepting terms. My letter must have reached here a week ago."

Chuck and Weinie exchanged glances and drove the team up to the front of the house.

Swede Johnson heard the wagon roll up and he came out on the porch in his stocking feet and without his shirt on. He saw the women and stood there like an owl blinking in the sun.

"That's the boss," whispered Chuck to the women. "He's very fond uh women and mighty good-hearted, but he's hard uh hearin'. Yuh got to speak loud to him, ma'am."

"Good afternoon!" yells th' tall one in uh voice that would carry plumb to th' forks of Roarin' Creek.

Chuck walked over to Swede and whispers out of the side of his mouth:

"Ladies to see yuh, Swede. They're hard uh hearin'."

"Ladies——!" grunts Swede, and then at th' top of his voice he yells: "Howdy! Git down and rest your feet!"

The women climbed down and walked up to the porch.

"You received my letter?" yelps the tall one in Swede's ear, and he looks as blank as an alkali flat.

"Louder," whispers Weinie.

"I asked," she whoops again, "if you got my letter!"

"What letter?" whoops Swede, leaning closer and getting red in the face.

"My letter!" screams the lady so hard that her glasses fall off.

"O-o-o-o-oh!" shrills Swede in a crescendo. "You git uh letter? Who from?"

"Fool!" she snaps, puffing like she'd run a mile.

"Yes'm," agreed Swede at the top of his voice. "He must 'a' been." And then he went in the house and shut the door.

"Well," remarked the fat one, "this isn't exactly the kind of a reception I was expecting, but we'll look the place over and if it is suitable I suppose we can put up with a few inconveniences, Clarissa."

"Few inconveniences? Why, bless my soul, Genevieve, I hardly know what to expect now. I can scarcely believe that this person ever wrote those letters. He's uncouth and——"

"Don't try to express it, ma'am," grinned Chuck. "Better men than you have exhausted their supply of profanity in tryin' to describe our boss. It can't be did. Me and Weinie will take yore trunks into th' house and you can make yoreself right to home. If yuh wants anything jist call th' cook. His name is Beans. Full title is Lee Fung Yok. He's imported stock."

All this time Zeb Crandall, Hen Peck and Mort Blackwell are sitting on the corral fence, gawping like a bunch of hungry magpies.

"Jist about what's th' main idea, Chuck?" yelps Mort, and Chuck and Weinie come down from the house, chuckling to themselves.

"That," replied Chuck seriously, "is ol' man Padden's intended and his imported chaperon. Th' human lodge-pole is th' bride to be. Did yuh hear 'em yellin'? They're hard uh hearin'."

"Chuck," remarked Hen in a reproving

voice, "yo're handlin' th' truth like uh shepherd."

"When Chuck gits to lyin' he's uh world-beater," agreed Zeb. "Jist about what is th' real truth of the matter, Weinie?"

"Chuck said it all, boys," laughed Weinie.

"Yuh see it's this way," explained Chuck. "Th' ol' man, so far as I can find out, has been correspondin' with this female, and when he finds out that she's comin' out here he loses his nerve and ducks."

"Th' ol' pack-rat!" exclaimed Hen Peck. "Makin' us believe all th' time that he's uh woman hater, and gittin' engaged by mail. Dog-gone!"

"Haw! Haw! Haw!" roared Mort. "Ain't he th' li'l ol' devil though? Let's all go up and look her over. I'd shore admire to see what he's selected."

"You fellers can," remarked Chuck. "I shore got a eyeful. We'll put th' team up. Say, Hen—oh, Hennery, don't flirt with th' ladies!"

THE delegation of three ambles up to the house and clatters up the steps. The ladies are there arguing with Swede, and everybody is talking at the top of their voices.

"You must have some one clean out those front rooms!" yelps the tall one. "Miss Elberfield and I must have those rooms."

"Haw-w-w!" roars Swede. "I can't do it. Them's th' ol' man's rooms. *Sabe?*"

"He told us we could have the best in the house," howls the tall one right back at him, shaking her finger in his face.

Swede gets as red as a beet in the face and hitches up his belt.

"Well," he yells, "I don't give uh——! Take 'em! I'll have Beans swamp 'em up a li'l."

"Do you employ all of these men?" asked the fleshy one, pointing to the delegation on the steps.

"Yah!" yelled Swede. "Them's Zeb and Hen and Mort. Jist plain punchers."

"Pleased to meet yuh, ladies," sez Mort, taking off his hat and speaking in an ordinary tone.

"Yell it!" exclaimed Swede in a whisper to Mort. "They're deef."

"Glad to meet yuh!" Mort tore a six-foot hole in the atmosphere with his voice.

"Delighted!" howls the fat one. "I am Miss Genevieve Elberfield and this is Miss Clarissa Vanderberg."

"Nice day!" whoops Hen, shaking hands with both of them. "How's yore folks?"

Miss Elberfield leaned against the side of the porch and watched the three walk back to the bunk-house.

"Clarissa, there are some real red-blooded men—real ones."

"Yes, my dear, but it's too bad they are so hard of hearing."

"What I don't see," remarked Hen, as they stopped at the bunk-house, "is what th' ol' man can see about Clarissa."

"Well," drawled Zeb, "after considerin' everything about th' Seven-A from th' mongrel dog to th' hired hands, I'd say that Hank Padden is jist about runnin' true to form."

The next morning Chuck meets Swede on the porch.

"Chuck, I ain't noways clear on this subject," announced Swede, jerking his thumb over his shoulder in the direction of the main part of the house. "Where in —— did these females come from, and what are they doin' here? I've worked my danged fingers off fer them already, and Beans swears that he'll quit tonight if they don't keep out of th' kitchen. They makes me dump all th' ol' man's stuff into th' back room. By cripes, when he comes back there'll be —— raised around this ranch, Chuck. He can't blame——"

"Good morning!" the tall one had slipped out of the door and yelled right in Swede's ear, and he ducked like some one was shooting at his right ear. "Have you mounts enough for twelve?"

"Hey!" yells Swede. "What you say?"

"Have you horses enough for twelve?" she yells again.

"What yuh goin' to do—git up uh posse?" howled Swede.

"Don't be sarcastic," she snaps like the crack of a .45-70. "I'll have to be sure of these small details, as I'm sending for the girls today."

"Sending fer th'— Say, what girls yuh talkin' about?"

"Goodness gracious, didn't you read my letter?" she yelled.

"Ma'am—" Swede strained his voice until his neck looked like a piece of rawhide rope, and his little blue eyes snapped— "I never reads anybody's mail except my own!"

Miss Clarissa stares at Swede and then at Chuck, who is choking to death from unnatural causes, grunts wonderingly and goes back into the house.

"I finds, Chuck, that th' only way to handle uh woman is to show her that she can't run over yuh," observed Swede.

"Uh-huh," agreed Chuck, wiping the tears off his cheeks. "When it comes to yellin', Swede, you shore got anything beat I ever hears. If I didn't know for shore that yore name was Johnson, I'd bet six to one that yore ancestors were war-whoops."

"And still I don't know why they're hivin' up here," wailed Swede.

"Pshaw! I thought you knowed, Swede. Lissen—them fe-males are rich. They been writin' to th' ol' man about buyin' th' ranch, *sabe?* They wants to acquire th' Seven-A, lock, stock and barrel. Ain't they said nothin' to you about it? No? Huh, that's shore queer. They hints to me that they likes your style and will probably want to keep yuh as sort of uh general manager in case they takes th' place. They asks me how much yo're worth per month and I said you was worth uh hundred at least. They says, 'That's very reasonable.'"

"Cripes! Is that uh fact, Chuck? I reckon I'll have to treat 'em as nice as possible. Who do yuh reckon them twelve girls are?"

"Didn't they tell yuh about them? Why them two females have been runnin' uh matrimonial bureau fer years—in fact that's where they makes all their money. Accordin' to their contracts they has to find husbands fer all th' girls on their books. They had twelve left over when they decides to quit th' business and settle down, so they're goin' to do th' square thing by bringin' 'em out here and gittin' husbands fer 'em right here in li'l ol' Montana. *Sabe?*"

"Cripes!" yelled Swede at the top of his voice." Mebby we'll all git uh gal from that herd, eh, Chuck?"

"Yuh don't have to yell at me thataway. Also you'll git uh girl—not. Th' fat one intimates to me that she likes you uh heap, and, believe me, if uh she-person with her capabilities makes up her mind to do uh thing like that she'll shore annex th' cognomen of Johnson mighty sudden."

"Me? Not me, Chuck! You intimate to her that I'm uh widower with six kids. Cripes! I won't marry her—not a-tall!"

"Well, yuh don't have to announce it to th' next county, Swede. Weinie and me had uh hard time tryin' to keep her from kidnapin' them two papooses of Potlatch Annie's as we came up here. She likes kids."

Swede hooked his thumbs over the waistband of his trousers and scowled at the horizon.

"What'll I do, Chuck?"

Chuck leaned against a post and contemplated the situation for a while and then slapped Swede on the shoulder.

"Tell her yo're married already."

"Huh! Where'll I tell her my wife is?"

Chuck snapped his cigaret over the railing and yawned as he replied:

"Dog-gone it, Swede, do you expect me to lie about it? I ain't afraid to tell uh li'l untruth once in uh while, but you shore got to fix yore wife's place of residence. Here comes th' females."

SWEDE ducked around the corner and ambled for the bunk-house, but Chuck, after one look, leaned against the porch and studied the hand-stamping on his leather cuffs.

"Where is the manager?" asked Miss Clarissa.

"Oh, I reckon he's gone down to see his wife," replied Chuck. "Said he was goin' down that way this mornin'."

"His wife!" exclaimed Miss Genevieve. "Why don't he keep her here at the farm? I can see where a woman's hand could work wonders here."

"Not hers, ma'am," gravely stated Chuck. "You see, she's uh squaw. He married Potlatch Annie uh few years ago, and they've got some kids. Th' bunch around here won't stand fer no Injuns hangin' around, so he has to keep her down on Roarin' Creek in uh tepee."

"Heavens!" exclaimed Miss Clarissa. "How perfectly unfair! This man evidently loves this Indian maiden, and just because of race prejudice he is forced to live apart from her. We must investigate it, my dear Genevieve."

"Yes, indeed! Would it be feasible, Mr. Warner, for us to arrange to have her brought up here where she rightfully belongs?"

"Well," replied Chuck slowly, "I don't reckon it would. You see, while I mixes my sympathy with yours fer th' pore klooch, I can't see where we has any chance to change things. Chief Runnin' Wolf is uh close relative of hers, and he hates th' whites a plenty. He'd jist about go on th' grouch

trail and lift some hair if we brought Annie up to live here with—No, I'd let well enough alone."

Well, things go along like this for a week. Poor old Swede is getting thinner, and Beans won't talk to any one at all. The boys, with the exception of Mort Blackwell, hang around the house and yell so much that when they go to bed they are unable to talk above a whisper. One morning Hen drops into the kitchen and walks up behind Beans, who is peeling potatoes. He says to Beans:

"Beans, can I have some—Git away with that knife, you Celestial devil! What do yuh think yo're doin'?"

"Whasamalla you?" howled Beans, throwing the knife on the floor. "You sneak in easy allesame woman. Woman no good, Hen. Alle time say, 'Beans, you washee face. Beans, you washee shirt'. Alle time wantum sclub flo'. Mebby so I'm chasum li'l fly! Ol' man Padden come pretty soon, I quit. Alle time scare—no good."

"Th' ol' man's comin' home tomorrow," stated Swede, in the bunk-house, after Weinie had been down after the mail. "He wants somebody to come—Chuck, yuh bantie-legged maverick, shut up!"

"Come ba-a-ack, come ba-a-a-ack—" mimicked Swede. "When you gits to singin', Chuck, you shore are uh specimen."

"Well, Swede, before yuh imitates uh singer you better learn th' words to th' song. It ain't 'come back' it's 'bring back.' That is shore one grand li'l song. I'll bet thet I can sing——"

"Chuck, th' ol' man wants one of us to meet him at th' station with uh saddle-hoss. You want to go?"

"Naw, let Zeb go. He ain't done nothin' but lay around all week."

"Zeb and Hen are out breakin' that sorrel team," informed Weinie.

"I seen 'em drive off down th' road uh while ago, and that team went away like they'd been broke all their lives. There's th' wagon comin' right now."

They stepped out of the door and the team was just pulling up to the house. There is a big black bundle in the back of the wagon, and Zeb is having a hard time trying to get the team up to the porch. Just then Miss Elberfield and Miss Vanderberg come out of the house and trot down the steps.

"Did you succeed?" yells Miss Vanderberg.

"Yes'm," replied Zeb. "I'd sort-a remark that we did—mostly. One uh them kids hides out in th' bunch grass and we leaves him. Th' rest are here."

Zeb untied the rope, pulled the blanket off and up stands Potlatch Annie. She grabs the back of the seat and steadies herself long enough to reach down and pick up a papoose, which wails loud and free.

"What th' —— yuh got there?" yells Swede.

"Your wife!" shouts Miss Elberfield. "Won't you make her welcome?"

"My Gawd!" croaks Swede. "My wife? That's ol' Runnin' Wolf's klooch! Where—what yuh goin' to do with her, Zeb?"

"Them women," replied Zeb, "pays me and Hen to go down and kidnap her and her flock and bring 'em up here. I didn't know she was yore wife, Swede, or we wouldn't have lost that papoose."

Swede can't stand any more so he claps his hat on his head and gallops down toward the barn like a locoed cayuse in flytime.

The women take Annie into the house, and all the bunch, with the exception of Chuck, go back to the bunk-house. Miss Elberfield turns to Chuck, sort of sarcastic like, and remarks—

"Do all the men in this country act that way when some one tries to do their wife a good turn?"

"Wife?" said Chuck wonderingly. "Oh, I—I—I think I begins to see. I reckon this is a mistake. You thought I meant she was th' boss' wife. You spoke of the owner. You see Mister Johnson isn't th' owner. Mister Padden—Henry L. Padden, is th' owner."

"That don't sound like the name," mused Miss Vanderberg aloud. "It was more like Mayer or—"

"Padden is th' name, ma'am. You see it's this way: Swede is supposed to be th' owner, but he ain't a-tall. Ol' man Padden got in bad with th' law—nothin' bad, you understand. He shoots two cowpunchers to begin with, ma'am. That wasn't nothin' to speak of, but one day somebody sees him brandin' uh cow what don't exactly belong to him. That's why he ain't in evidence. Uh course he's gittin' bolder all th' time, and I sort-a look fer him to show up here at th' ranch to-morrow. I don't know what he'll think when he sees his squaw up here. But no matter what he

does, you women don't need to be scared. He ain't never shot no women—yet."

"You say he will be here to-morrow!" exclaimed Miss Elberfield.

"Won't that be lovely, Clarissa. The girls will be on that noon train, and it will give them a chance to see a real live bad man. I hope he won't disappoint us, Mr. Warner."

"No," replied Chuck. "I—I—I don't reckon he will. Who is goin' after th' girls?"

"Messrs. Peck, Crandall and Lopp," replied Miss Clarissa.

"I shore ought to be included," groaned Chuck to himself. "If I ain't qualified to join th' Messrs, I don't know of anybody around this illahee what is."

"My Bonnie-e-e lies over th' ocean. My Bonnie-e-e—" wailed Chuck, lying on his bunk, with his hands under his head. "Say, Weinie, this is th' dog-gonedest funniest thing I ever heard of. Here these females been here all this time and nobody knows what for."

"Uh-huh," agreed Weinie, with his face twisted out of shape, trying to shave in a splinter of glass on the wall. "Ain't it too true. Uh course everybody knows but me and you, Chuck. You told 'em."

"Well," drawled Chuck, "would you have 'em live in ignorance?"

"Well, I do know that I'm one uh those selected to meet th' girls, whoever they are," states Weinie, as he tossed the razor into a box and sighed at his scratched face in the mirror. "They're comin' in on that noon train from th' East."

"Some people shore are lucky," complained Chuck. "Here I've got to go down there with uh hoss to meet th' ol' man at eleven. If there's any disagreeable work to do I shore gits uh front seat. I wonder what th' ol' man will do when he sees all these females, Weinie?"

"And his foreman missin'," supplemented Weinie. "Swede has hived up with Pete Gonyer, over on Roarin' Creek, and Beans threatens to shoot th' first woman what pokes her nose in th' kitchen."

"Swede got tired of yellin'," laughed Chuck. "Mama mine! This shore has been what you'd call an audible week. Has Potlatch Annie gone home yet?"

"Nope. I seen her this mornin'. She's livin' in th' ol' man's room and I see her wearin' that fancy silk coat he bought that time he got stewed down at Great Falls. When he sees her there'll jist about be uh vacancy in her tribe, Chuck."

Chuck saddled two horses, and just as he climbed into the saddle he heard a hail from the house and saw Miss Elberfield waving at him.

"I just wanted to ask you one question," she said, as Chuck rode up.

"Do you really think your manager loves this Indian girl?"

"Well," drawled Chuck, "I'd shore hate to say he don't. You see it's this way: Annie, bein' an Injun, is entitled to uh certain allotment uh ground in the reservation. If she's got uh husband he gits in on it, and every half-breed papoose gits uh share too. *Sabe?* I don't *sabe* love much, but any man can admire good land."

"Mercenary brute!" she snapped. "Will he be here today?"

"Yes'm, about noon. I'll probably be with him. You see I'm about th' only person in th' county he can fully trust. Everybody trusts me."

"Perfect faith is a great thing," she sighed.

"Yes'm. Sometimes I think that I'm to be classed with th' inscription on uh dollar, ma'am. Everybody trusts me. So long, ma'am."

OLD Hank Padden swung wearily off the east-bound train and shook hands with Chuck.

"How's everything, Chuck," he asked.

"Pretty fair, Hank. Have uh good trip?"

"Very dry. Let's go over and loosen up some of th' dust."

They ambled over to Sam Belden's saloon and finds Zeb, Mort, Weinie and Hen playing freeze-out. They shake hands with Padden and line up to the bar with many a wink at each other.

"Well, here's luck to him, boys!" laughed Zeb. "And may all his troubles be li'l ones."

"Huh!" exclaimed Padden. "They can't be too small to suit me."

"Ten pounds is uh good average, I believe," chuckled Mort.

"Hm-m-m" grunted Padden, looking foolish at Mort. "Ten pounds uh what? I suppose you fellers ain't done nothin' but trail into town and lick up hooch since I left. Yo're all talkin' loco language. Zeb, did

you and Mort go after them strays over on th' Little Muddy?"

"Nope," replied Zeb. "We been too busy close-herdin' th' house. You know why."

"Only I don't know!" snapped Padden. "Would some of you imitation cow-punchers tell me what th' joke is?"

"Haw! Haw! Haw!" roared Zeb. "Ain't he there, boys. Dog-goned ol' fox, eh? Oh, well, Hank, it happens to th' best of 'em. Lets all go over to th' depot."

They left the saloon, slapping each other on the backs and laughing, while Padden stood and stared at Chuck, as if asking for an explanation.

"Chuck, am I running an insane asylum or a cow ranch? Am I crazy or what's th' matter?"

Chuck grinned at Padden and admired the color of the liquor in his glass before he replied:

"You see, it's this way. They wasn't talkin' about you a-tall. Swede Johnson is goin' to marry Potlatch Annie, and he's done stated that you are goin' to be best man at th' weddin', and also to be godfather, whatever that is, to his first born. *Sabe?*"

"Lord A'mighty, Chuck! Annie's already got uh husband!"

"Not now," stated Chuck. "She did have, but somebody slips ol' Runnin' Wolf uh quart uh wood alcohol."

"But Swede ain't goin' to marry that klooch is he?"

"Shore is, boss. She's livin' in th' ranch house right now—yore house."

Old Man Padden slammed his glass on the bar and snorted with fury.

"By th' horns on th' moon! I'm goin' right up there and bust this up! In my house, eh? Dog-gone it, Chuck, that Swede knows I don't allow no woman, red, white or black in my house! Here I goes away fer uh week and th' first thing he does is to bring uh flea-packin' squaw up there. I'll show that pool-ball-headed cow-trailer where to git off at, Chuck. Come on and I'll show yuh some fun."

"I'd shore admire to," replied Chuck. "But I can't go with yuh. My bronc done picked up uh nail in his hoof and can't hardly walk. I've got to rustle another hoss before I can git my saddle home."

"Well, I'll go on then. Git uh hoss as soon as yuh can, cause when I gits through with Swede I'll shore need another foreman. If yuh sees th' rest of them crazy punchers, tell 'em to come home sober or git their time."

"Hello, Mister Padden!" yells a voice that rasped on their ear-drums, and there stood Swede Johnson, with a grin all over his face.

Padden stands there and stares at Swede for a full minute. He don't seem able to speak, and Swede remarks in the same tremendous voice:

"I hope they don't buy you out Mister Padden. If they does I won't work for 'em."

"What th'—what's th'—matter with you?" howled Padden. "Do you think I'm deef? Yuh—yuh Swede Johnson, yo're uh —dog-gone, I jist don't seem to be able to express my feelin's a-tall. You squaw-marryin', lop-sided, marble-headed full cousin to uh coyote, you. What do yuh mean by bringin' uh broad-faced, flea-packin', smoke-smellin' aborigine into my house, eh? Yo're fired, Swede! I only wants you to come near my ranch once more, and that will be to git what's left of that squaw after I pitches her out on her head! *Sabe?*"

Padden pushed the amazed Swede to one side and gallops over to the hitch-rack, where his bronc is tied. He vaults into the saddle and without a backward glance, fogs for the Seven-A.

"Huh!" grunted Swede, as Padden faded into the distance. "I'd almost say that I'd been fired, Chuck."

"Uh-huh," agreed Chuck, sitting down on the saloon porch and rolling a smoke. "Takin' it all in all, Swede, uh feller would de-duce that he ain't goin' to put himself out none whatever to induce you to labor on his property any more."

"He said I was uh lop-sided, squaw-marryin'—Say, Chuck, I ain't married to no squaw! Dog-gone it all, I ain't!"

"Don't yell, Swede. Either ease up or hire uh hall. I ain't disputin' yuh am I?"

"Somebody told that around, Chuck. By cripes, when I finds th' hombre what circulated that story I'll stake him out to uh sidewinder! Chuck, did—did you tell 'em I married uh squaw?"

"Me? Say, Swede, there are times—infrequently—when I'll depart from th' naked truth to help uh friend, but far be it from me to marry a friend into th' Piegan tribe." And then to himself: "That's no lie. Annie's uh Flathead."

HANK PADDEN spared not his mount on his homeward journey. Usually an easy-going, hard-to-make-mad person, when he did get angry he shut his eyes to everything but his own personal feelings. He spurred his horse right up to the porch of the house and slid off. He dropped his reins and strode up on the porch, and just then the door opened and out walked Miss Clarissa.

"Did you wish to see some one?" she asked, peering at Padden.

Hank looked at her for a moment and then snorted:

"Chuck was a danged liar! He said it was uh squaw!"

Then he starts for the door. Miss Clarissa steps in front of him and holds up her hand.

"Would you mind stating your business?" she asked.

"Ma'am," replied Padden, "since when has th' owner of this place got in so bad with his household that he has to stand on his porch and explain why he wants to go in his own house?"

"Oh! So you're the owner, are you?" She looks Padden over from boots to sombrero. "Well, you look just like a man who would marry a poor squaw for gain. For a few measly acres of land, you marry her. Yes, you look like you would do it. I pity the poor girl."

"You do, eh!" snorted Padden. "I never posed as uh he beauty, ma'am, but I shore resents marryin' squaws. Jist about who are yuh and what are yuh doin' here?"

"I suppose you don't know who I am."

"Ma'am, I'm no good at puzzles. I'm a-listenin'."

"I am," she replied, "the woman who wrote those letters. I also received replies from you. Your memory must be very short."

Padden jabbed his spur into his ankle and scowled at Miss Clarissa.

"I'm neither asleep or drunk, so I must be crazy," he mumbled to himself.

"I suppose you'll say next that this Indian girl isn't your wife."

"My—what? Wife?" roared Padden. "Did you say wife?"

"Don't you dare to deny it!" she snapped, shaking her finger in Padden's face. "I can forgive you for killing those two cowboys, and for stealing cattle, but a man who deliberately marries a poor Indian girl for what property she can bring him, makes her live in a teepee, while he lives in ease and comfort, and then denies it—well, he's outside the pale of forgiveness."

"Go on and strike me!" she continued, as Padden grunted and started toward her. "I wouldn't put it one bit past you."

"Lord love yuh, woman!" wailed Padden. "I wouldn't strike yuh—besides it's again' th' law in this state to hit uh person which had glasses on. Somebody's shore gone loco, ma'am. I'd shore admire to——"

"Here comes the girls!" exclaimed Miss Clarissa, pointing down the road.

Padden turns and looks at the wagon-load of petticoats driving into the front yard, and then sits down weakly on the steps.

"Sufferin' coyotes!" he wailed. "They're comin' in bunches!"

In the next few minutes there is a lot of female talk spilled around the place. Everyone tries to talk at once, and they swamps Miss Clarissa with kisses. As Zeb said afterward; "There was more kisses spilt right there in uh minute than ever was smacked in Yaller Rock County since the Custer fight."

"Now, girls," said Miss Clarissa, after the kissing bee was over, or had rather died down to skirmish fire, "come right in the house. We will probably have to get the men to build us some more beds, but we'll get along nicely."

The girls danced up the steps and into the house, right past Padden who is sitting there like a foundered calf, looking at the sky. Weinie, Hen and Zeb are still sitting in the wagon, and looking foolishly at Padden, who seems to come out of his daze after a while and notice things. He opens his mouth several times and then points at the stable.

"Put up th' team," was all he seemed able to say.

"Gosh, th' ol' man is still there on th' steps!" chuckled Hen, as the trio went back to the bunk-house.

"Uh-huh," agreed Zeb. "He ain't got no other place to go. We ain't got no room in here for him—and th' stable's full."

"I wonder where Chuck is?" mumbled Weinie through the lather on his face. "Drop that necktie Zeb! Dog-gone, uh feller can't own nothin' around this place without some jasper actin' free with it. I buys that tie uh purpose fer this occasion. Chuck's got uh dandy green one in his warsack—help yourself."

"Over th' unconscious form of old man Warner's son yuh might," stated Chuck from the doorway.

"Hello, Chawles!" laughed Zeb, sluicing his face from the wash-basin.

"Did yuh see th' girls? Chuck's uh wise ol' owl, Hen. He opined he'd have first pick from this female herd, but Swede gave th' secret away. Did yuh notice th' li'l blond, Hen. Th' one what sat beside me all th' way up. Some han'some li'l filly, eh? Believe me, Hennie, ol' boy, li'l Zebbie is shore goin' to mark one uh them matrimonial holdovers off th' books."

Chuck sat down on the bunk and picked up an old magazine.

"Ain't yuh goin' to harvest th' hair off yore face, Chuck?" asked Weinie. "Aw, be uh sport. Jist because yuh didn't git first pick ain't no reason fer uh peeve. Hereafter don't tell Swede anything, old-timer."

Chuck shook his head and sprawled on the bunk, as the rest of the bunch trailed off toward the house. He rolled a cigaret and pondered deeply.

"Matrimonial bureau," he grinned to himself. "Well, dog-gone it, mebby it wasn't a fabrication after all."

He thought of the new green tie and pink shirt in the war-sack, and reached for the razor.

"You never can tell which way uh dill pickle might squirt," he soliloquized, as he reached for the sack. "I might as well put on that blue vest too."

He took his belongings out of the vest he was wearing and, as an afterthought ran his hand into the inside pocket. He pulled out a crumpled envelope and turned it over in his hands. He studied it for a few minutes, with a frown of wonderment on his face, and suddenly broke into a smile. He slipped his finger under one corner of the flap and opened it.

For fully five minutes he sat on the bunk and read and reread the contents of that envelope. Finally he slipped it back into the pocket and sat down on Zeb's bunk, and incidentally on top of Zeb's guitar. He picked up the instrument and picked softly on the strings.

"Bring ba-a-ack, bring ba-a-ack, oh, bring——"

"Hey, Chuck! Oh, Chuck!" yelled Zeb's voice from the house. "Come up here, th' ol' man wants yuh, Chuck."

Chuck walked slowly up the slope toward the house, which seemed strangely silent for a house so full of the gentle sex, and opened the door. Everybody was in the front room, and the silence was pregnant with disaster. The women were all standing around Potlatch Annie on one side, and on the other stood Padden, all alone, and off to one side—sort of neutral—stood Zeb, Hen and Weinie.

"Did you not tell me that this Indian girl was the wife of your manager?" asked Miss Clarissa.

"He surely did," stated Miss Genevieve, before Chuck had a chance to speak. "I heard him."

Chuck cleared his throat and fidgets with his hat.

"I'll tell yuh how it was if you'll give me uh chance. Yuh see——"

A little scream from one of the girls nearest the door causes every one to turn, and there stood the tallest, meanest looking Indian in the state of Montana—Chief Running Wolf. He's painted up like a circus bill-board and carrying a heavy carbine. The top half of his face is stained a bright yellow, the lower half is vermilion, and two bands of green are painted across his forehead and one runs the full length of his hooked nose. He exuded an aroma of lemon extract and bay rum.

"Hooh!" he grunted like a Mogul freight engine on a grade, as he shifted the rifle to a handy position and looked over the assemblage. He swung the rifle, with both hands, across his hip and scowled at Padden.

"Yo' stealum klooch?" he grunted.

"Not me, chief," denied Padden. "You see—yo're supposed to be dead!"

"Plenty lie no good! Johnson say yo' stealum. Mebby so Tenas Charley (Chuck) help stealum. Lie no good! Hooh!"

He stood as straight as a young lodge-pole and shook the feathers in his greasy hair.

The women were all scared stiff, but they didn't have anything on Hank Padden. Hank knew that Running Wolf was drunk, because he had got a whiff of the flavoring extract, and he knew what an Indian was capable of in that condition. All the time the chief is making his war talk, Padden is getting his fingers under the window and lifting it up. Just then the chief sees Potlatch Annie, and he breaks into a smile.

"Huh!" he pats himself on the chest and nods his head.

"All he needs is Watson and th' needle to be uh Sherlock," murmurs Chuck to himself.

"*Mesika klatawa klaghanie!*" howls the chief at Annie, and points at the door.

She lost no time in getting outside. He turns to Padden and takes one step forward.

"*Kahpho kopo talapus!*" he hisses at Padden, the same in English meaning "Brother to a coyote!" and slaps that rifle barrel into the palm of his hand.

"*Bang!*"

Either he had been doing all his talking with a cocked rifle in his hands, or struck the hammer in some way as he swung the barrel down, because the rifle went off and blew a pane of glass out of the window behind Padden and filled the room fullo fsmoke.

Rats never left a sinking ship with such dispatch as the present company left the Seven-A ranch house. Padden took what was left of the window and carried it proudly around his neck as he galloped wildly down past the corral and off across the flat toward the Little Muddy. He knew that Running Wolf was a crack shot.

A few of the women knew that the house had doors, but the majority took it for granted that the owner knew the best exit and followed him through the window. The trio of wife-hunters clawed their way out of the front door and lit running right away from there.

Running Wolf, in the exuberance of his flavoring jag and war-paint, emptied his rifle at everything in sight and then reached for more ammunition. His reaching was in vain, for the reason that at the moment his rifle was empty, Chuck slid out from under the horsehair sofa and attacked him from the rear.

"Wah!" yells the chief, as Chuck hustles him to the door, by the slack of his pants and the short hair in the back of his neck.

"*Spat!*" Chuck's heavy riding boot caught the chief in the most convenient part of his anatomy, and the chief lit on his painted face in the gravel.

"Wah!" he snorted, sitting up and scowling at Chuck. "He-e-eap cultus!"

"Shore was!" snapped Chuck, rubbing his ankle. "*Klatawa*, yuh ornery acid swillin' aborigine!"

The chief got up and waddled off down the trail. He needed a drink to drown the insult.

"That shore was uh welcome interruption," chuckled Chuck. "In about another second I'd have had to tell uh lie."

He walked back into the house, but there was no one in sight. Not even a ribbon was left to show that a woman had ever invaded the precincts of the house. As Chuck walked back to the front door, he ran right up against the muzzle of a rifle, and Hank Padden's angry face was behind it.

"Now, dog-gone yo're hide, Chuck, yo're a-goin' to tell th' truth!"

"Drop that gun, Hank!" roared a voice behind them, and there stood Magpie Simpkins, the sheriff, covering Padden's back with a long, blue Colt of large caliber.

"That's right, Hank, drop it! What yuh tryin' to do around here—kill off all yo're help? Slip these on him, Chuck."

He handed Chuck a pair of handcuffs which Chuck accepted mechanically and looked foolishly at the sheriff.

"What—what in——yuh tryin' to pull off, Magpie?" yelped Padden. "Stickin' uh gun in my back and wantin' me to wear hardware on my wrists! I ain't done——"

"Anything yuh say can be used agin' yuh in court," stated Magpie, as he snapped the cuffs on Padden's wrists. "Jist better keep yore mouth shut and come peaceful like, Padden."

Padden flopped down in a convenient chair and stared first at his wrists and then at Magpie. The women had evidently overcome their fears and crowded into the house and stared at the sheriff and his prisoner. Padden scowled at Magpie for a few minutes, amid a deep silence and then—

"You long, cadaverous kin to uh coyote, what do yuh mean? Used agin' me in court? Me? Jist about what fer?"

"Hank," replied Magpie, looking at the women in open-mouthed wonderment, "I've got uh warrant for yore arrest on uh charge uh murder."

"Huh—I—uh—say, who did I murder?"

"Th' paper don't say, Hank. It was swore out by uh woman who was in Curlew today. She got th' warrant from Judge Wilson, and he hands it to me when I'm goin' through there today. It don't say who yuh murdered, but it does say that yuh done got two punchers."

"That woman, whoever she is, is uh danged liar!" roared Hank.

"Don't you call me a liar!" Miss Genevieve Elberfield strode out from the bunch of women and faced Hank with a flushed face. "I swore out that warrant. You can't escape the consequence of your acts.

If men won't clean up the West, the women will have to. We didn't care to have our girls come out here while a creature of your caliber was at large, but we didn't find out about you until it was too late, so Miss Vanderberg and I decided that we would do the next best thing and put you behind the prison bars. Oh, you don't need to look surprised, Mister Man. We were told all about you by a man whom everybody trusts. He wouldn't lie."

"Hello, folks!" yelled a voice from the doorway, and Johnny Myers, foreman of the Triangle outfit, removed his hat with a flourish when the saw the ladies. "Who's sick?"

"Who's sick?" echoed Hank. "By th' horns on th' moon, I am, Myers! Better git on yore bronc and hit fer th' ridges, 'cause this wickiup is shore sufferin' from aggravated hallucinations."

"Well," remarked Myers, "it don't look natural, that's uh fact. I was cuttin' across th' hills down by Roarin' Creek uh while ago when I meets Chuck Warner on uh roan hoss and he shore was goin' toward town some fast. He pulls up long enough to tell me that he's on his way to git uh doctor, and then he fades out of sight. That's shore some travelin' bronc he's ridin'."

The sheriff took two long strides and looked out of the door.

"Uh-huh," he grunted. "That roan shore can run. Cost me uh hundred."

"I beg your pardon," said Miss Clarissa, "but did you—did I understand that your name is Myers?"

"Yes'm, that's my name. Johnny Myers, of th' Triangle."

"I'm Miss Clarissa Vanderberg, of the Gladstone School for Girls."

"Gosh!" exclaimed Johnny. "Why, I've been lookin' fer uh letter from you fer two weeks. I figgered that yore cattle-ranch outing didn't pan out th' way yuh expected. Did—did Chuck tell yuh this was th' place?"

"No, no, I don't believe he did."

"Well, ma'am," grunted Padden, "that's one thing in his favor. It's probably th' first time that he ever had uh chance to lie and didn't."

"Ma'am," whispered 'Hen, edging over close to Miss Clarissa, "did you ever run uh matrimonial bureau?"

"Why, the very idea! Of course not! Why do you ask that?"

"Oh—I—huh—jist asked, ma'am. No harm done."

"Well, I suppose we'd better move over to Mr. Myers's farm at once, or go back East again," stated Miss Vanderberg.

"Amen," sighed Padden. "There's two things I can't stand. One is uh woman around th' ranch, and th' other is—ridin' th' sheriff's hoss after uh doctor."

"MY BONNIE-E-E-E lies over th' ocean. My Bonnie-e-e-e lies—" sang Chuck Warner in a plaintive minor key, which was completely drowned out by the clatter of the cattle car under him, as it crossed the Curlew switch and headed west. "Mama mine! When yuh come to think of it, Bonnie ain't got nothin' on li'l Chuck. I reckon me and her goes fifty-fifty. But I does all my lyin' on this side of th' sea."

Dex Weaver's Conversion

by Robin Anderson

DEX WEAVER pulled up his pony at the Twin Peaks Hotel just as the morning mists were lifting from the Bued Valley. The pony, sturdy little animal, was covered with a crust of dust and sweat, and Dex himself was powdered white with dust till he looked like a miller.

Mine host Wiedermann—clerk, manager and owner of Twin Peaks' flimsy suali-and-bamboo hostelry—sauntered down the path which was bordered with a few anemic-looking red-and-yellow Spanish lilies sticking forlornly up out of the hard-baked sand. He greeted Dex with jovial and noisy cordiality.

Weaver and Wiedermann had been "Mets" together in 1900. "Met" being colloquial for Metropolitan Police—that splendid body of men, organized by the new-born Civil Government from the flower and finest of the volunteer army, disbanded at the cessation of Philippine hostilities.

Since those strenuous days Wiedermann had waxed generous of girth, barrel-shaped, dilatory, thoroughly tropicalized. He had three chins, and filled to overflowing his khaki trousers and blue shirt. Dex remained slender, physically hard as nails, as keenly alive and alert as on the thirteenth day of August, 1898, when the Nebraskans marched down the beach and entered Manila.

Wiedermann grubbed lazily along, making enough money for his simple needs. He was genial, amiably expansive, friend of all the world. He had married a mestiza wife and expected to end his days in the Philippines.

Dex Weaver—horse-breeder, mining prospector and land owner extensively—had become by intrepid courage and sheer dogged persistence the most successful man of the rugged Benguet country.

He was a rough, picturesque, cowboy sort of person who held himself bafflingly and sternly aloof from all intimacy. He was reticent, gruff and blunt, rude to the last degree to any one venturing to question him as to his past.

No one really knew Dex Weaver or understood him. The best-known character in the Benguet mountains, he was "X" in the problem, always the absolutely unsolved quantity.

He had the blue, keenly penetrating, all-comprehending eyes of the man who lives much in the open. His crisp curly hair was slightly gray. Sometimes there was a laugh in his voice, but a smile never lit up his hard blue eyes, or his bronze, cold countenance. Around himself he seemed to have built an ice wall of enmity toward all humanity.

If there was one person who held no fear of Dex Weaver, it was Wiedermann of the fat smile.

"Well, what's doing down by the Pasig?" he roared good-naturedly, slapping Dex on the back with an affectionate paw weighing about twenty pounds. "Cough it up, Dex. Why ain't yer come in with the stage? Cassidy's mules is up to the Zigzag pretty near by now; quit here at three."

"That's just why," announced Weaver briefly. "Manila train snailed into Dagupan too late. Cassidy got 'way ahead—every seat full up. Have to be in Antimok

at noon. Man coming to look over a claim."

He clipped off his words sharply like the snap of steel. Dropping into an ancient and dilapidated lounging-chair, he flung his wide-brimmed felt hat on the floor of the porch and flicked his dusty leggings with a damp red bandanna. The ride from Dagupan to Twin Peaks was thirty miles of bad road, under the best conditions. Now in the hot weather everything was a choking powder of dust.

Weaver had been riding all night and was tired, frankly tired. He stretched out his legs luxuriously over the extended armrests of his chair and sighed in relief.

Mr. Wiedermann carefully deposited his huge bulk in a bamboo chair, especially constructed to stand the severe strain of his enormous frame and lit a battered black pipe.

Weaver carried always a tarnished silver cigar-case in his breast-pocket but no one had ever seen him smoke.

"How'd ja happen t' hev a hoss so handy-like there ter Dagupan?" questioned Wiedermann between puffs.

"Sent the mare down for Captain White two days ago," answered Dex succinctly. "He bought her last week. I'll expect you to send her back down the trail tomorrow."

"Y' get whatcha want, doncha, Dex?" grinned Wiedermann.

"If I don't I take it by force," retorted Dex sharply.

"I savvy," said Wiedermann with a wink. "I savvy! Delayed shipment, huh?"

"Call it what you like," agreed Weaver indifferently. "I needed the mare. The extra trip won't hurt her."

He stretched himself still further back in his chair, eagerly gulping in great breaths of the cool air of early morning.

"Thunder," he muttered. "What any human wants to sweat away in Manila for when even in this hole—" glancing with rude and frank contempt at the ramshackle nipa-roofed rest house—"you begin to feel the stiff breeze from the mountains!"

IT WAS half-past four. The world comes to life in the Bued Valley just as the dawn merges into the cool freshness of earliest day. Roosters were crowing everywhere, answering each other from far across the river.

A few last faint stars were dying palely in the heavens. The bamboos began to silhouette themselves greenly against the golden morning sky. Down back of the hotel the Bued River purled in singing cadence along over its rocky course.

A soldier-bird shrilled away in the bamboo thicket, his scarlet head like a red helmet making a brilliant splash of color against the plumy green.

A pockmarked Ilocano woman strolled by the morning-glory-wreathed gate. Her redplaid cotton skirt was pinned up out of the dust, her sinuous brown body visible through the transparent yellow *jusi camisa*.

She shuffled along, her bare, flat brown feet turned well outward. On her head she balanced artfully a huge iron kettle, but she carried herself with the dignified bearing of a princess.

By the hand she dragged a little coffee-colored pickaninny, whose tiny loose shirt, his only garment, ended just at the waistline.

There was little of an inspiring nature in the primitive landscape, but these were all home signs to Dex.

A whisky-faced man in gay striped pajamas, towel in hand, creaked across the porch to the shower-bath. A trio of "schoolmarms," good to look upon, in figured blue-cotton crêpe kimonos and straw chinelas, giggled their way along the porch past Dex to the ladies' shower at the hotel's other extremity. They were on their way to the teachers' camp at Baguio.

"Who's here?" demanded Weaver suddenly. "Not those," with a scornful look toward the cleanly inclined quartet who had just passed by. "Who else?"

"Well, lemme see," pondered Wiedermann. "They's Izarte and Tobel, the commissioners, asleep in Number Seven. Then they's Hartmann, Bureau of Public Works, and ——! Dex," he announced triumphantly, every crease of his heavy face breaking into a smile, "Father Mullay's here! You savvy him? I mean," he illuminated, "the man they're all dippy on—kin turn a ragin' heathin into a bloomin' angel by the flick of his eye."

He whispered his news with hoarse excitement, as if conveying the most portentous announcement.

"Priest?" queried Weaver diffidently.

"Eh-yah," nodded Wiedermann. "Catholic by perfession, but sect don't cut no ice

with him. He's jest one —— fine *hombre.* His *corazon's* on the blink; so the bishop he sez, sez he, go up topside and re-coöpy-rate. Smokes, he does, the *padre,* and takes a drink with yer like any old *hombre.*"

Weaver snapped his teeth together sharply and looked at Wiedermann suspiciously out of the corner of his eye.

"Don't you go wishing any priest on me, Wiedy," he threatened. "If you try it," he amended curtly, "I'll mash your ugly fat phiz to a pulp. If there's one being I hate worse than a woman, it's a priest," he said savagely, "a —— whining, black-petticoated, Latin-chanting priest. Don't you dare put him near me when I stow away the buckwheats! Savvy?"

"I savvy," cowered Weidermann with a nod of his bullet-shaped, close-shaven head.

Could he keep the two apart for an hour or so, Weidermann wondered? Before the sun really began to get busy, Weaver would be well on his way, and mayhap, for once, Father Mullay would not awaken early.

Wiedermann heaved himself with many groans and sighs from his chair, beat the ash out of his pipe on the porch railing and waddled away to the kitchen.

He would hurry up breakfast at all events. He had no wish for one of Dex Weaver's famous and infamous insulting outbursts, here under his own vine and banana-tree.

Fate was against him, however. When he summoned Dex to breakfast half an hour later, there sat Father Mullay, chatting with the school-teachers and drinking his coffee comfortably in the suali-walled dining-room.

With furtive cunning, Wiedermann escorted his friend to the far end of the room, seating himself by Weaver's side.

As Dex tackled his mango, and Father Mullay at the other table joked and laughed with every one near him in his engaging fashion, big Weidermann breathed relievedly.

Things seemed to be moving along propitiously, when Weaver finished his breakfast and strolled across the road to the stables.

One of the school-teachers asked the priest if he had seen the new swimming-pool.

"No, me dear," he answered with his beguiling brogue. "I've not. Would ye like a bit of a peep at it before the sun comes up?" he asked kindly. "I'll be stopping here till the afternoon stage goes up and it's glad I'd be to walk there with you."

He sought his black felt hat and joined the young woman on the porch. By the woven bamboo gateway stood Dex Weaver, ready to start.

The Igorot boy, in his khaki coat, red G-string hanging between his bare, brown legs, was leading Weaver's horse across the road.

Wiedermann, walking along behind the priest, felt the air suddenly surcharged with trouble. He was overwhelmed with nameless misgivings.

Father Mullay paused to pat the buckskin pony, clean-limbed, strong little beast —Weaver's own carefully-bred stock.

"It's a fine animal ye have there, me lad," he said with an appreciative nod toward Weaver. "I've never set eye on a finer. Could you perhaps be telling me where I could find the like—a nice little queen of a horse—to carry me over the hills of Baguio?"

Dex busied himself with adjusting the bridle. His jaw clenched hard and his blue eyes smoldered.

"I dare say it's too busy ye are now," went on the good man amiably, "but one day perhaps, in Baguio, you'll be helpin' me a thrifle to find a horse for meself. The lass here says—" with a pleasant laugh—"there's no one like yerself up here for knowing horseflesh."

Suddenly Dex Weaver raised his head and looked Father Mullay straight in the eye. His face flamed a dull, ugly red.

"It's not for you, or any other black-skirted hypocrite, that I'm in the horse business," he growled fiercely. "When I went to Mexico, they told me on the border to look out for three things—bad whisky, a Mexican, and a Catholic priest. The first two," he muttered fiercely, a sardonic twist to his mouth, "are bad enough, but the last is a hypocrite straight from hell!"

And with a baleful look of hatred, a stinging, sullen, lashing insult in his deep voice, Dex Weaver flung himself into his saddle and galloped off in a cloud of dust down the road.

FATHER MULLAY gazed blankly at Wiedermann and the wide-eyed, dumfoundered little school-teacher. He crossed himself reverently.

"The good Lord and saints presarve us!" he exclaimed helplessly. "And whatever harm have I done to the lad?"

Wiedermann crumpled up and sank heavily on to a near-by bench, mute, bewildered astonishment written all over his huge good-natured face.

In the easy-going bit of anatomy which stood for his heart, he registered an oath to get even with loco Dex Weaver.

Father Mullay was one of the few obsessions of Wiedermann's lazy, happy-go-lucky life. Back in the army days when cholera waxed fierce and death claimed its unremitting toll among the American soldiers, there were not half enough military nurses to combat the epidemic. Henry Wiedermann had lain him down to die of the dread disease and Father Mullay, then army chaplain, had with his own hands nursed Wiedermann back to life and strength. His affection for the good priest was unfailing, doglike in its faithful devotion.

No one ever tried to explain Dex Weaver, and there had been in Baguio history many a furious outburst reported when women or curious folk had essayed to break into his self-imposed solitude. But though he held himself severely aloof from all friendly advances, Weaver was, as a rule, passably civil. Never had been chronicled an encounter as wholly unjust as this. Wiedermann could say nothing palliative, offer no excuse.

"The —— loco blackguard!" he roared. "The beast of a low-down, rotten hound!"

He would have launched forth into a wild harangue of profanity, of which he was past master, but respect for the priest restrained him.

A hurt look lingered in Father Mullay's limpid blue eyes, but he smiled benevolently, albeit a trifle wanly.

"Sure, it's sick the lad must be," he said with a profound sigh.

Later, as the stage swung along on its nerve-racking way, Father Mullay pondered gravely over the problem of Dex Weaver and his retort discourteous.

The golden sunlight of late afternoon lit up the cup-like valleys far down below. Towering high above, the tips of the gray peaks glowed rose and purple. Patches of full sunlight unhampered by the shadow of the mountains, gleamed brightly on the terraced hillsides, lighting them here and there with the fresh, lush young green radiance of Spring.

In the crevices and ravines, a thousand feet below, the Bued River foamed on greenly, never silent.

The narrow, shelf-like road, hewn out of the solid rock, hugged the mountainside closely. Now and again the stage drew up to give way to a passing bullock train of perhaps a dozen two-wheeled carts with curved canopy tops of woven bamboo, drawn slowly by patient, fawn-coated Ceylon cattle.

Sometimes a frightened Igorot, wrapped in his gaudy blanket, scuttled to the side of the road to avoid the heavy, oncoming coach. Always he was leading by several ropes fastened to a long bamboo pole, a half-dozen or so of scrawny, pointed-nosed, prick-eared mongrel dogs, for dog-meat is the delicacy of the hill tribes.

Ocasionally the friable rock of the cliff-side showed roughly, newly red where the shale had broken away in a recent landslide. The now famous Baguio Highway was the lurking-place of death for many a Filipino and Japanese workman in the days of its incipiency.

The trip was fraught with many perils ten years ago. Across the temporary, fragile suspension bridges, swinging high over the yawning cañons, the drivers ran their mules in those days, the quicker to have done with the danger.

Father Mullay gave little thought to the hazardous journey. The keen hurt of the early morning still rankled and lingered poignantly in his mind. But with his habitual, unselfish thought for the comfort of others, he kept his worries to himself.

He commented to the other passengers upon the marvelous terraces, constructed by the thrifty Igorots. Often these terraces, green with corn and rice and camotes, climbed the mountainside to a height of several thousand feet, sometimes following the contour of the cañon for half a mile, without varying an inch from dead level.

"I thought it was savages they were, with their dog-feasting," remarked the priest in surprise. "But look ye at the wonderment of their gardening!"

At the foot of the Zigzag, the curling, curving, marvelous last stretch of the Baguio Highway, the pungent scent of the pines blows freshly down to you, but you

see the sturdy trees themselves near the top of the Zigzag where the red clay begins.

"Sure, I wonder will I ever meet the strange lad Weaver again," mused Father Mullay to himself as the stage drew up at the steps of the Hotel Pines. "There must be a bad bruise in the heart of him!"

Such a motley and strange company as the world has rarely seen frequented the famous Baguio caravansary when the century was not yet in its teens. Picturesque cowboys from the stock farms, wearing their felt sombreros and rough-and-ready riding togs with devil-may-care grace; American commissioners and civil officials and their daintily-gowned blonde wives and daughters; dusky, dark-eyed, *ylang-ylang*-perfumed señoritas of the high-class Filipino families, dressed in gay brocaded, stiffened skirts with funny little round trains, hand-wrought camisas of finest piña, and black silk aprons adorned with delicate thread lace.

Miners foregathered there from all over Bontok—stalwart, sinewy men with weather-beaten faces and business-like-looking, nail-studded boots. Army officers, smartly spurred and uniformed, rode over often from Camp John Hay, the military post.

Out in front of the hotel, tethered to the railing, stood constantly numbers of hard-bitted, stocky, sure-footed mountain ponies. The mode of locomotion about the hill country then was wholly and uniquely by horseback. It was either the saddle or stay at home.

Father Mullay was greeted with shouts of welcome as he climbed down from the stage. His friends were legion, and until the inexplicable rebuff from Dex Weaver, the gentle priest did not realize that he had an enemy in the world. His creed seemed to be a genuine and all-understanding love of humanity.

Father Mullay was a fine, well set-up figure of a man. The flowing skirts of his cassock lent nothing of effeminacy to his appearance. He was tall and virile and masculine essentially. And the smile that so often lighted his fine-featured, intelligent face was like a benediction in its strength and sweetness.

As he entered the hotel he was bodily carried off by the governor's daughters to a corner over by the roaring log fire and gently pushed into a big armchair.

"Now, tell us about the reception at the Ayuntamiento," they cried eagerly. "Who was there? Was it too hot to dance? Wasn't it dull with so many of us away up here?"

There was a mischievous twinkle in the priest's blue eyes as he remarked—

"I was only there a second, me dears, but I can truthfully state that with their handsome low-cut gowns, all the lovely ladies thried to outstrip each other!"

Among the peals of laughter he pulled himself away gently from the detaining hands.

"After supper it's all the latest gossip I'll be telling ye," he protested merrily. "But now I must be having a drop of mountain dew with Captain Healy down in the bar to welcome meself here. Hold ye thereby, mavourneens, till I return!"

Along with the heart trouble which had caused the archbishop to send Father Mullay to the mountains, he was suffering from insomnia. So instead of going to the church settlement which the Catholics had established in Baguio, the archbishop ordered that a little house be found for Father Mullay where he could have absolute rest and quiet. Over on the road to Trinidad he was finally settled in a wee little bungalow, whose garden was full of white Benguet lilies in full and fragrant bloom.

At the Government stock farm some one found a staid old, broad-backed gray mare to carry him over the steep trails on his round of calls and duties, for even in his illness he would not relinquish his constant endeavor to do kindly deeds for every one, and sectarian scruples never entered into Father Mullay's policy of unselfish helpfulness. Very frequently he would meet Dex Weaver on the road, for Weaver himself lived in an isolated little bungalow over by Trinidad.

Sometimes they would pass so closely on the narrow paths that their stirrups touched, but never a gleam of recognition shone on Weaver's cruelly cold, bronzed face. In no way did Father Mullay try to force the acquaintance; he let it all drop as Weaver so evidently desired. But the kindly man was puzzled over Weaver's strange, perverse hostility toward him.

Over the bar at the Hotel Pines, Weaver would watch Father Mullay narrowly through half-shut lids, as the priest chaffed and joked with the officers and miners. He would take up his glass as Father Mullay's black cassock disappeared out of the door-

way and his laugh would be at the assembled men, as Father Mullay's laugh had been with them.

"You're a bunch of easy marks!" he would exclaim contemptuously in his deep voice. "Such —— easy marks! Do you think for a minute he means this good fellowship stunt he is forever pulling off—this priest? He's playing for place, that's all, and some of you are sure to fall for his Catholic game before long. I know the race," he said cynically, "I've seen it before!"

Whenever people sensed a crisis threatening, by tacit understanding seeking to protect Father Mullay from possible insult, they managed to keep the two apart.

The priest was greatly loved and always in demand. You were as apt to see him officiating as umpire at a ball game, or helping the ladies to dispense tea hospitably at the Country Club, as you were to hear him Sundays preaching a simple, earnest sermon to a varied and numerous congregation in the little Catholic chapel, down in the Whitmarsh valley.

The Episcopal minister protested pathetically that on the days Father Mullay was announced to preach, only a handful of people attended his own service. One met Father Mullay everywhere.

He grew a little paler and thinner as the days went on, and began to stoop the merest trifle, and a curious faint dizziness stole over him at most inopportune moments.

But he never mentioned his illness, and at almost any hour of day or evening you would meet him astride his complacent gray mare, Peggy, plodding over the hills on some errand of kindness. Perhaps he would be carrying a great sheaf of snowy hill lilies to some flower-loving friend, or balancing carefully on his saddle woven bamboo baskets of the delicious and rare strawberries Petrelli was beginning then to cultivate at the experimental gardens.

Again he would be taking gay picture-books or bonbons, ordered with careful forethought from Manila, to some sick child at the hospital. He took to lodge with him in his tiny house, scarcely big enough for himself and his Igorot boy, Ted Roberts, a prospector who had almost fatally injured his back months before. Roberts was a lank, melancholy, cadaverous husk of a man who had developed since his accident a continuous grudge against all the world.

"If we could make him forget a few of his grievances," said the doctors, "he would get well."

Father Mullay garnered him in as his housemate.

"Sure, if it's any one can induce him to smile, it's meself," said he, and of course he accomplished his generous purpose at infinite inconvenience to himself, and so made another devoted slave of the sullen, bent-up miner.

Ofttimes his charity took strange turns. Down at the teachers' camp, Mrs. Seaton's baby was desperately ill for want of goat's milk, and who but Father Mullay should come riding into camp one afternoon with a much surprised and indignant nanny goat bucking and rearing at patient old Peggy's heels?

Over at Camp John Hay, where the soldiers adored him, he would often drink a glass of beer in the mess tent, and swap yarns with them in the greatest conviviality.

Even Haik Wok, the arbiter, despot and dominator of one of the fiercest non-Christian tribes, was obliged to own himself Father Mullay's debtor and lay the unwonted tribute of his devotion at the priest's door.

Among the hill people Haik Wok was a great man and no one ventured to question his dominion as overlord, except a miserable handful of people, a lawless, thieving, nefarious offshoot of Haik Wok's toilful tribe. They lived in eastern Bontok in a wretched, tumble-down scrap of a village and they rebelled against and disputed, as far as they dared, the dynasty of the famous chieftain.

According to the mountain code, Haik Wok was a just and honest man. His rank and power had been won in fair fighting without treachery or strategy.

He was accustomed to the help-yourself sort of fighting of the hill tribes and, before the Americans established their strange restricting laws, he had been wont to indulge in the occasional lopping off of an enemy's head whenever vengeance prompted. He was calm, cold, implacable—the true savage—viewing life with stolid Oriental philosophy. The only flaw in his armor of serene impassivity was his idolatrous worship of his daughter, Lai Wok, a slender, lovely, golden-skinned girl of fifteen.

Now Lai Wok was as unlike the other Igorot maidens as is day from darkness.

They are generally exceedingly unattractive —stoop-shouldered, thick-limbed, black hair hanging in oily wisps about their heavy-featured, greasy brown faces.

Lai Wok was supple as a young bamboo tree, her hair fell about her shoulders in silky, raven black waves and her eyes were inscrutable dark brown pools of tenderness.

She was feudatory princess of the land about, queen of every *cañoe*, the grande dame of the mountain people. And with the strange perversity of femininity, be they savage or society born, she fell desperately enamored of a handsome, dastardly scoundrel of a stripling belonging to the hostile tribe, and old Haik Wok's heart was broken.

The savages are not resourceful and know no punishment except violence and to Haik Wok that was impossible, loving his daughter as he did.

His friends and under-chieftains in great distress betook themselves to Father Mullay for counsel.

"We can see no way out," said the interpreter sadly. "She will presently run away and make marriage with the bad man, and our chief will in desperation kill himself."

Father Mullay resolutely put his wits to work and evolved a solution.

At Antimok, many a mile from the hostile village, Mrs. Dealy, the clever wife of a well-known mining prospector, had a year or two before started a training-school for Igorot girls. She had begun the school merely as a pastime to brighten the monotony of long days of solitude, but the scheme had unexpectedly developed into a tremendous success. Vacancies were applied for months ahead.

Father Mullay astutely bethought him of the revised edition of the old adage, "Absence makes the heart grow fonder—of other things," and, though the school was full to overflowing, he persuaded Mrs. Dealy, with much pleasant blarney and Irish fluency of reasoning, to accept Lai Wok as a very extra and important pupil.

The inevitable happened. In the fascinating game of learning the white men's customs, their letters and their labors, the attractions of her lover dimmed and faded in the girl's heart, and at the end of June he was completely forgotten.

Such was Haik Wok's gratitude that at all times embarrassingly abundant gifts of young pigs, very alive and squealing, and huge, deep flaring-mouthed baskets of camotes or yams, encumbered Father Mullay's dooryard.

At vitally inopportune moments two or three under-chieftains would be squatted on their haunches 'neath the priest's windows, twanging away the weird monotone of the Igorot music on their bamboo harps.

"Sure, it's a serenade on the G-string they're playing me!" said Father Mullay with comical pathos.

Dex Weaver heard everywhere, as a matter of course, the praises of Father Mullay, but, as the priest's popularity increased, even so Dex Weaver's hatred of him augmented. He laughed mockingly, sarcastically, sneeringly, whenever the priest's name was mentioned.

"He'll get you yet!" he warned with acrid cynicism. "Keep that tight in the back of your minds."

ONE June evening close on to nine, Dex Weaver, riding home through the pungent sweetness of the pine woods, beheld with his own eyes an example of Father Mullay's unbiased altruism. The broad-minded generosity of this particular case of philanthropy would have won any other antagonistic heart. But Dex Weaver pulled up his horse under the shadow of a great tree-fern, crooked his leg over the pommel of his Mexican saddle, and watched the whole proceeding with sardonic contempt. Sergeant O'Leary of the Seventh Infantry, stationed over at the military reservation, was the chief actor in the comedy.

Now, O'Leary was an unequaled, exemplary soldier. But small matter how cannily he made resolves, always on pay-day—the Waterloo of many a soldier and sailor—his chaste resolutions wavered and tottered and broke asunder, leaving him groveling and wallowing in some bacchanalian slough of despond.

This month there had been an accumulation of pay-days. Therefore, O'Leary had fared forth from camp in the early morning, a wonderful Crœsus-feeling surging in his broad chest. He sampled everything alcoholic within a radius of ten miles. He had, with reckless abandon and greed, partaken of at least a dozen different brands of potations, topping all off, as a climax, with a strong draft of the deadly Igorot *tapuy*,

He had somehow slouched and shambled along as far as the fork in the road leading by the old post-office. And there he sat him down, beautifully, indubitably intoxicated to a degree which utterly forbade further locomotion. He was muttering vitriolic comments at his limply useless legs which refused to work, when Father Mullay, on his gray mare, came ambling by.

But O'Leary continued swearing. Moreover, his language became even more emphatic. It does not elucidate matters to be exact in the details of his hectic profanity, but suffice it to say he swore like a well-practised pirate, with delicate little dashes of untranslatable Igorot imprecations, interpolated by way of emphasis.

The priest climbed down from his horse. "See here now, me good boy," said he soothingly. "Don't be miscalling yourself bad names. I misdoubt me, it's back for taps you're wanting to be?"

Another flood of objurgations ensued from the incapacitated O'Leary, vaguely conscious of his own shortcomings.

"It's beyond doubt very drunk ye are, me lad," said the good priest, "but, faith, why have you grounded your craft mid-between ports this wise?"

The sergeant looked up stupidly.

"There's but the one way," went on the priest decidedly. "Heave yerself up on Peggy and betake yerself home."

O'Leary had reached the stage of wishing to argue each and every issue.

"Don't be contradictious," admonished Father Mullay gently. "'Tis not advisable. Get ye up on the mare then, and I'll lead ye home meself."

A rift of reasoning for a moment burst through O'Leary's befogged mind. The guard-house and even faint possibilities of court-martial loomed darkly before him. He ponderously lurched forward and stood at the horse's side. More he could not do.

"Oh, well," sighed Father Mullay benevolently, "it's up I'll get you some wise."

For several minutes the priest tugged and strained and lifted at the sergeant's thick-set frame. Incapable of any appreciable assistance, the heavy soldier was a weary weight for the fragile priest. Finally, with a tremendous effort, he hoisted the inert mass up in his arms and flung O'Leary into the saddle.

"It's a feckless lad ye are," he admitted, picking up the bridle and walking along at the horse's head. "But sure, it's back I'll get you somehow before taps."

O'Leary drooped and fell limply forward on old Peggy's neck, fast asleep. But the strange couple covered safely the mile and a half to camp, and arrived, it is told, in ample time before taps sounded.

"Grand-stand," growled Weaver, as he watched them depart; and yet he well knew that the priest was totally unaware of his presence.

And now with the coming of July, the wet season started in earnest. The word Baguio, literally translated, means typhoon, and it is up in those mountain fastnesses that the great, cyclonic tempests of the Philippine Islands have their origin.

There had been, as yet, no severe storm, but always there was the faint elusive odor of rain in the air. The damp white mists dropped down and covered everything. The sky was rain-swept, the pines sodden, the red clay roads a mass of ankle-deep mud.

And it was willed by a capricious fate at this time that Dex Weaver should be in Father Mullay's debt, as were half of the population of Benguet.

OF A late afternoon, Weaver was riding over toward the hotel, greatly elated, for he had just closed a most lucrative deal for a string of polo ponies at Camp John Hay. Being, of course, a superb horseman, he paid no attention to his mount. He was smiling to himself over the successful sale to the army, which would be, no doubt, merely the forerunner of many others more remunerative.

The road was slippery beyond expression. The pony picked his way cautiously along through the slimy mud, but great balls of the red clay caked into his hoofs and he kept his foothold with the utmost difficulty, and was trembling and quivering in every limb.

At a sharp turn in the road, the thump and bang of a belated blasting charge just below in the valley where they were making the roadway, put the finishing touch of terror on the nervous horse. He leaped into the air simultaneously with the noise of the blasting, deftly shooting his rider clean over his head and down the hillside.

There was a crack, a crash, the noise of rent shrubs and boughs, the rattle of falling earth and stones, and the mad rush of a galloping horse.

The shale and earth and stones slipped and slid under Weaver. A great rock loosened, went crashing down into the valley, starting an avalanche of smaller stones.

Dex clutched at a near-by tree, missed it, and slid on along down the muddy, oozy bank with the speed of a thunderbolt. The violent impetus of his mad flight drove him with terrific force against two closely growing pine-trees, and in the gap between them his leg caught and wedged fast.

He could hear the thudding hoofs of Rob Roy, gathering speed as he receded down the road. Weaver laughed grimly to himself. Just in front there was a sheer drop into the valley of a thousand feet, but there would be no glimpse of eternity for him as yet. Fate had intervened in his behalf, as usual. He hadn't fallen far and he wasn't hurt. All he had to do was pull himself out from between the friendly trees and clamber back up the steep slope.

He sat up as well as he could manage and with the full stretch of his strength, endeavored to wrench his leg loose.

After several minutes of ineffectual effort, he realized, in alarm, that he was utterly powerless to free himself. He was clamped there, securely imprisoned in the vise-like grip of the two trees, and he had no knife in his pocket, he suddenly remembered. Well, here was a cheerful prospect. Sometimes in the rainy season no one passed along this way for days at a time.

He hallooed loudly for help. The echo came floating back mockingly. Some one heard the call, however, for the slender sickle of the new moon, showing wanly through the mist, revealed Haik Wok returning home by the North Drive in the damp of early moonrise. He had been to the general store in the village with his interpreter, one of the under-chieftains who understood some English, to buy sugar and cloth and other necessities.

He made a most imposing figure, as he strode majestically along, his tall, polished steel spear, higher than his head, gleaming in his hand, his gaudy blanket wrapped around him, the end flung cavalier-wise over his left shoulder. His black, oiled hair was trimmed in the symmetrical Dutch cut affected by the Igorots; he wore gold hoop-earrings, and, slung from his neck, was a tiny pipe suspended by a thin gold chain. Below his blanket, between his bare, brown legs, on which the muscles stood out like great ropes, dangled his red G-string. Across one cheek lay a deep scar, showing silvery white against the dark brown of his skin. He was calm, impassive, dignified, the all-powerful arbiter of the country round about.

He heard the call for help, and, seeking a path with the swift facility of the savage, he made his way down the rain-soaked, slippery mountainside. There, at length, in the pale light of the misty moon, he beheld Dex Weaver pinioned securely between the two trees.

Now, if there was one person in the whole universe against whom Haik Wok held a long-cherished grudge, it was Weaver. A year or two before, Weaver had managed by subtle trickery to wrest from Haik Wok one of the best-yielding mines in the mountains, the Bok Lok claim, where gold lay in the rock like plums in a pudding.

All this time past, the chief had been thirsting for revenge, nursing his hatred all the more ardently because he kept the strength of it close-sealed in his own heart. And here came his chance, clean-cut, before him. It would be such an easy matter—just one swift jab of his spear while his arch-enemy was imprisoned there like a trapped bird.

Every expression faded from his face, as always happens with the Oriental in time of the great emotions of killing or love. He climbed swiftly up the hill to get his spear, which he had left with his companion by the roadside.

In the pale, hazy light, Haik Wok saw some one in deep conversation with Dit Blo, the under-chieftain.

"Ah," he boomed, joyously striding forward, for the person was none other than his good friend, Father Mullay.

"Is your health of the best, honored sir?" he demanded, through the medium of his interpreter, in the formal greeting of the countryside. "Is not the cold moon chilling you to your marrow?"

He picked up his spear and caressed it fondly, passing his hand lightly across the needle-sharp blade.

"My health is good, and what is the best with yerself," asked Father Mullay courteously. "And where might he be going with his spear?" he added. "Sure, it's not for killing, he carries the fearsome thing?"

To Haik Wok the interpreter repeated the priest's query. A faint light of pride

shot across the chieftain's face, expressionless theretofore as a mask of bronze.

Ah, forsooth, here was a valorous deed he could do for his good friend, for gossip had gone even into savagedom anent Weaver's persistent hatred of the priest. Now, what a fine return he could make for the priest's former favors!

He would kill Weaver quite peaceably and quietly and thus avenge the priest's wrong, as well as arrange his own private and particular grievance. His brilliant and chivalrous scheme he conveyed in guttural Igorot syllables to the interpreter. Dit Blo, a little doubtful of the manner in which Father Mullay might receive the plan, translated it all into fairly clear English.

The priest almost gasped aloud in horror, but suddenly caught himself, remembering the difference in his code of ethics and that of the primitive man beside him. He realized the necessity for prompt and decisive interference, but he must go adroitly about it, and carefully, and with great calmness and tact.

"Sure, is it caught fast he is down below there?" he asked with a great show of indifference.

"Quite fast," imparted the interpreter. "It is like a trap which holds his leg. He can not stir until the tree is cut away, and he seems to have nothing to cut it with."

"H'm—h'm," remarked father Mullay casually.

For a moment he was silent, regarding the chieftain closely.

"Is the idea a good one, think you?" said he. "Perhaps there is some unwisdom in it."

He knew a few words of Igorot which helped to make his meaning clear, and he spoke very slowly, seeking to eliminate from his speech the picturesque brogue for which he was famous. His mind worked rapidly on some plan to effect Weaver's release. He could not afford to make a false move and appear too anxious, else he might only incite Haik Wok to commit the murder in a still more brutal way, before assistance could be obtained.

"Who put this thing into his head?" he questioned the interpreter. "For it is never an idea of Haik Wok, the brave, the just, the courageous, to kill a man when he is down. It is in straight fight, face to face, Haik Wok would be meeting him!"

The interpreter again translated, repeating Father Mullay's remarks in Igorot. Haik Wok turned and looked at the priest intently. There was perhaps some truth in the advice he gave. Very well, then, let Weaver lie there and starve to death. Surely no one could hold him, the great Haik Wok, responsible for that.

Remarking his hesitation, Father Mullay made in his simple fashion a brief, wordless prayer for help, for inspiration to turn the chieftain's mind from the thought of killing.

Suddenly an idea flashed across his brain. Haik Wok was notably avaricious, call it thrifty if you will. He was known to have a great and rabid weakness for the wonderful American gold eagles, of which, it was reported, he had stored away in some secret hoard a vast quantity.

"And, too," added the priest enticingly, carefully, "if I mistake not, Haik Wok could possess himself of several gold pieces if he, with his own hand, set Weaver free. He is an important man up here, this Weaver. The governor would pay the gold himself.' '

"Mother of mercy," he breathed to himself, "may I be forgiven for the lie I'm telling."

"And, then," he continued aloud, with seductive strategy, "when it's so easy a matter to get the gold, if he has to smash Weaver's head, let him do it, say, in a week or so!"

Haik Wok, standing still as a statue, shot a swift, keen glance of scrutiny at the priest who returned the look frankly and innocently with his limpid blue eyes.

"You are certain this reward of gold will be given without question?" demanded the interpreter.

"Positively certain I am," replied the priest. Then to himself he murmured, "It's quick tracks I'll have to be making to the governor and pay it myself, or things will be going all twisty-ways."

There ensued a brief argument between the two Igorots. At length the chieftain mumbled a few words to his interpreter, stood his spear against a tree, took a sharply curved knife out of his belt, and started down the hill in Weaver's direction.

"He will do as you counsel," announced Dit Blo. "He will set the señor free and kill him in fair fight afterward."

Father Mullay managed to make an exit from the scene of his triumph with amazing

rapidity, and, urging the surprised Peggy into a canter, pounded off down the road.

"It's a fine reputation for veracity I'll be giving the clergy," he remarked to himself, a gleam of benevolent mischief in his kindly eyes.

"I must make haste and get there betimes, for it's hotfoot Haik Wok will be coming after the reward. And by the same token," he continued his soliloquy, "after paying the governor, it's to silence I must caution him. For if Haik Wok knew it was me own wiles had played him the thrick, it's *en brochette* he'd be serving Weaver and me with his long spear!"

Just how the deed was accomplished no one knew, but it was a certainty that Haik Wok and no other released Weaver from his perilous position, and also a certainty that Haik Wok received the much-coveted reward.

But if Dex Weaver heard of Father Mullay's last charitable act which so closely concerned himself, he gave no sign.

BY THE middle of June, when the cooling rains began in the lowlands, all the fashionable folk had migrated from Baguio to Manila.

There was left at the Hotel Pines a mere handful of people—some engineers and road inspectors, a few invalids in quest of health, and half a dozen mining prospectors who made the Hotel Pines their headquarters. Only three American women remained of the throng who had, a month before, made the place gay with song and laughter and dancing.

There was Mrs. Judson, plump, comfortable and kindly, the wife of the hotel manager, and the two nurses from the Civil Hospital, a temporary frame structure which stood on the crest of the hill a stone's throw from the hotel.

Though he had been under the constant surveillance of Dr. Matson, the capable Government physician, Father Mullay had not improved greatly in health. At the bishop's request, he was to stay on in Baguio till the end of July.

As the rains became more frequent, Dex Weaver saw the priest very seldom. He was always busy with his horses, or looking for washouts and landslides on the roads to his mines.

Then one day there broke in unparalleled fury, the fiercest, most violent, most devastating typhoon that had visited the Islands in a quarter of a century.

Over at Mirador, the Jesuit priests saw the premonitory indications from their observatory, but the storm came too swiftly to enable them to warn the mountain people.

Every one remembers that July typhoon which left desolation and despair beyond imagining in its wake, made bloody and awesome history in the annals of the Philippine Islands, then tore along over the China Sea and spent its fury in Hongkong, where it wrecked the entire fishing fleet and drowned most of the fisher people

A great gust of wind came up at noon, driving solid sheets of rain across the mountains. The rain flung up a heavy, white mist as it fell, so it was impossible to see a foot ahead. The creaking bamboo trees bent and snapped like twigs. The supple, tufted tree-ferns lashed themselves like whips against the sky. Great boulders the size of houses fell crashing down into the roadways.

In the valley, the river rose between its banks, angrily green, snarling and growling. Its lullaby had ceased.

It was a marvel that the whole great round earth did not break asunder and crumble into atoms in the furious onslaught of the tempest. The wind, wickedly howling, tore the thatched roofs from the fragile native huts, hurtling them along through the air with terrific speed.

The day of the great typhoon, Father Mullay was having luncheon at the hotel with Mr. and Mrs. Judson, just as the opening chords of the storm overture sounded. Dex Weaver, with several other men, had run their horses to the nearest shelter, which happened to be the Hotel Pines, when the hurricane broke, sweeping all before it.

No one courts exposure to the elements in the fury of a mountain typhoon.

In the hotel dining-room, where they were all gathered, it grew so dark you could scarcely see your hand before your face. The lamps were lighted, for the heavy mist shut out what remained of the daylight.

Outside, the tempest shrieked and moaned with ever-increasing fury. A giant pine-tree, uprooted by the wind, fell across the roof of the hotel veranda, crushing it in like paper.

"You'd better spend the night here, Father, I guess," advised Mrs. Judson,

"They ain't no use thinkin' of goin' outdoors in this storm."

"Faith, it's right ye are," agreed the priest, whose heart jumped and fluttered about in curious and irregular fashion at each fresh outburst of the roaring gale.

Dex Weaver and his friends betook themselves below-stairs to the bar, where they settled down for the afternoon over a friendly game of poker.

Father Mullay, accompanied the Judsons to their apartment. As the day wore on, the storm seemed to redouble its strength. The wind ripped off railings, tore up trees and flowers, and broke the shutters loose, crashing them back and forth against the house.

It was getting on toward six o'clock when a man, who had endeavored to come from the other end of the porch, entered the bar to take a hand in the card game. He had been thrown to the floor by the force of the wind, and half-drowned by the rain.

"It's worse than the hurricane deck of a steamer in a high storm, that twenty-foot trip along the porch," he gasped, shaking his drenched clothes before the wood fire. "It's one hell of a night."

"It would be bad business if any one up here took sick just now," commented Hartmann, pulling aside his chair to make room for the newcomer.

"Dr. Matson must be just about at Twin Peaks on his way back from Manila, and he couldn't get up the Zigzag to save him!"

"What's the matter with Doc Mills over to John Hay in case some one was took real bad?" yawned one of the miners.

"Nothing doing," answered Hartmann. "Nothing doing! Mills went down to Manila yesterday to see his wife, who's got a bad case of dengue. It's up to Baguio folks not to get *infirmo* tonight, for there's no *medicos* around to look after 'em!"

The words had scarcely left his mouth when Nurse Woodleigh hurried into the room, where the men were intent on their cards, her face white and tense with anxiety.

"Do you suppose you could possibly get word by telephone through to Twin Peaks?" she asked, her voice trembling audibly. "Father Mullay fainted about half an hour ago up in the Judsons' apartments. I've done everything in my power to bring him to, but he seems to be sinking gradually. The storm has been too much for his heart. Oh," she entreated, "won't some one please get word to Dr. Matson at Twin Peaks to come and help me?"

The men shook their heads dubiously.

"No use tryin', I'm afraid, Miss Woodleigh," drawled Dade, one of the engineers, who knew every inch of the road. "We'd do mighty neah anythin' fo' Father Mullay," he continued reflectively, "but they ain't no possible way. Every wiah's down! I reckon they ain't a native even 'ud guarantee to go to Twin Peaks and fetch Matson back."

"Isn't there *some* way to get word?" implored the nurse. "I'm afraid he is dying."

Her professional calm fell from her like a garment. She wrung her hands piteously, and the tears coursed slowly down her cheeks. She was the woman now. The nurse had faded into the background.

"I wouldn't ask it, but I am at the end of my resources. I don't know what to do! Dr. Matson knows the case and could, perhaps, save him. Can't you think of a way to reach him? We all love Father Mullay so!"

Weaver and the other men had laid down their cards and were watching Miss Woodleigh intently. The case must be indeed serious when calm, phlegmatic Nurse Woodleigh became thus excited.

"None of us could get down the trail," said Hartmann gravely. "I don't think even an Igorot would undertake it. I can't see a possibility of reaching Matson," he added in sober finality. "When the Ilocano mail-carrier came in at three, he said the road was entirely washed out from the middle of the Zigzag!"

Suddenly, Dex Weaver pushed back his chair and rose to his feet, on his face his habitual expression of inscrutable, calm reserve.

"If you will lend me your poncho, Hartmann," said he casually, "I will ride down to Twin Peaks and bring back Dr. Matson."

"But, Mr. Weaver," protested Miss Woodleigh, thinking she had not heard aright, "I said it was Father Mullay who was so very ill."

A quizzical look flashed across Weaver's face.

"I heard you perfectly," he assured her, "and I said I would go to Twin Peaks and bring back Dr. Matson," he repeated. "I have a good pony here and can get others down below!"

He stood very erect, his head flung back half defiantly.

"Will you lend me your poncho as well, Dade?" he demanded. "I'll need an extra one for Matson."

If a bomb had exploded in the quiet room, it could not have created greater excitement. Every one gazed at Weaver in the utmost astonishment, but he went calmly and coolly about his preparations, as if it were all the most ordinary occurrence in the world.

"But, —— it, Weaver!" finally blurted out Hartmann, "don't you know you'll never get through? No man or horse can live in this storm—much less bring back the doctor!"

"Nevertheless," said Weaver, a look of iron determination on his bronzed face, "I'm going to try it and, what's more, I believe I'll succeed!"

He fastened his own poncho and rolled up the extra one, tucking it under his arm. The men, overwhelmed with amazement, stood watching him.

Nurse Woodleigh, her hands clenched tightly together, said softly—

"You are a strange man, Dex Weaver, but you are certainly a brave one."

As he left the room, a terrific burst of wind and rain tore the door almost from its hinges.

"*Adios!*" he called back. "I shall be here by daylight!"

And, bending his head against the gale, he started down the steps and was swallowed up in the roaring, whirling darkness.

"He's plumb loco," exclaimed Hartmann. "Plumb jibbering loco! It's a human impossibility for him to return with Matson."

"I don't understand his motive," said Miss Woodleigh quietly, "nor his impulse. But, please God, may he come back safely and bring the doctor with him!"

She stood for a moment at the foot of the stairs which led to the upper rooms.

"I will do all I can to keep Father Mullay alive," said she tremulously, "but if, in the night, I call for help you will hurry to me—some one, won't you?"

For hours, the men sat around the fire, smoking in silence. They played no more cards. Judson, his jolly, red face strangely serious, came and sat with them.

The rain trickled down the chimney and sizzled and spurted as the water hit the hot flames.

The Ilocano and Igorot *muchachos*, stretched on their *petates* throughout the house, were the only people who slept. The air was heavy with tragedy.

Father Mullay lay dying up-stairs, and out in that tempestuous, terrible blackness, somewhere down the mountain trail, Dex Weaver was riding to certain death.

ABOUT six o'clock, when daylight, even through the heavy mist, was beginning to show itself, there came a shout outside and the sound of rushing, galloping horses. And into the smoke-hazed room burst Dex Weaver, soaked to the skin, covered with mud beyond all semblance to a human being, his right arm broken and hanging limply useless at his side, a great bleeding gash across his forehead.

And with him, caked with mud also and half-drowned, carrying his medicine-case under his poncho, was Doctor Matson, safe and sound.

The incredulous men crowded around the two riders, questioning, congratulating, wondering.

"Don't ask me how we got through," gasped Matson, a breezy, optimistic little man. "Ask the Lord Almighty and Dex Weaver."

The water was streaming from his garments in rivulets, his pulpy boots spurted fountains at every step he took.

"We ran it fine," he went on, "I can tell you! Hanging on teeth and toe-nail—trees and mountains falling all about us. Look at Weaver's arm now! But by the blue gods!" he exclaimed vehemently. "Those ponies have Pegasus beat to a finish! And," he sighed thankfully, "here we are."

He turned suddenly to Judson.

"Tell me," he demanded anxiously, "is there any change in Father Mullay's condition?"

"He's just the same," made answer the manager, "still unconscious."

"I'll go up right away," said the doctor, "but," he added, with a rueful shake of his head, "I sure ought to set Weaver's arm first!"

Dex was leaning against the fireplace. He was very white and appeared utterly exhausted.

"You go about your business, Matson," he growled. "You're here to look after some one besides me. I can't get broken any more in an hour or two, can I?"

It was noon before Dr. Matson brought

Father Mullay back to consciousness. The priest, pitifully weak, but mentally quite himself, smiled up at the doctor feebly.

"Sure it is, I'd have gone out with the tempest but for yerself, doctor," said he.

"Well, you're as good as new now," rejoined Matson buoyantly, starting toward the door. "I'll send the nurse to do sentry duty over you, Father, for I'm off to set Dex Weaver's arm."

"And what has Mr. Weaver done to break his arm—now?" queried the priest in astonishment, turning his head weakly on the pillow.

"Just a small matter of a baby mountain fell on him," nodded Matson, "while he was escorting me back to look after you, Father, that's all."

Two hectic spots burned suddenly in the priest's white cheeks.

"And Weaver it was who brought you up here?" he asked with feverish interest.

"It sure was," admitted the doctor cheerily, "and the devil's own time we had getting here." And he went on to recount a few details of the perilous trip.

The priest lay silent, lost in thought, gazing out through the window where the trees still swayed and lashed themselves in the heavy gusts of wind, and the rain dashed against the panes with a sound like falling buckshot.

"Insomuch as Mr. Weaver has been that kind," finally spoke Father Mullay, "would ye be granting me the favor, doctor, of a wee bit of a word with him—when ye've set his arm?"

Mentally Matson cursed himself for being fool enough to let slip the news about Weaver, for he, like every one else in the little mountain world, knew the story of the miner's persistent antipathy toward Father Mullay.

The doctor was well aware that complete quiet was absolutely essential after a heart attack like that through which Father Mullay had just passed, yet also he realized that opposition to the priest's strongly expressed desire to see Weaver might do grievous harm. He considered the situation seriously for a moment.

"If you will promise me, Father," he said, "only to keep him here ten minutes—ten minutes—no more, mind you," he exacted, "I'll let him come just as soon as I've glued his arm together and hemmed up his forehead a trifle."

"I'll mind the time, doctor," the priest assured him with childlike impatience, "but it's not failing ye'll be to let him come?"

When Weaver entered the room a little later, the apathy of illness seemed to have left Father Mullay. He was all alive and afire with eager interest and curiosity.

"I hear it's yerself who brought the doctor to me," said the priest, looking up at Weaver with his winsome smile, "and if you don't mind, me lad, would ye be telling me why it pleased you to do the like of this thing?"

A real smile—an illuminating, benign, heavenly smile—broke over Weaver's countenance. It was like sunbeams dancing on the frozen torrents of Winter, breaking asunder the locked ice, long cold and silent.

With almost boyish shyness, Weaver, with his uninjured hand, pulled up a chair to the bedside and seated himself.

"It's all very plain, sir," he acknowledged gravely. "I've had to give in—that's all. I find I can't help liking you. You see, it was a priest who wrecked my life," he avowed, quite simply, "and until I met you, sir, I judged them all by his measure, which was a blamed bad one. Now, I've come to think you're the rule, and he was the exception. Do you care to hear about it?" he asked bluntly.

With his unbandaged hand, Weaver reached into his breast-pocket and drew forth the battered silver cigar-case he always carried.

"Tell on, tell on, me lad," urged the priest softly. "I always knew there was a black bruise in the heart of ye!"

BY THE low, shaded lamp, Weaver leaned forward and pressed a hidden spring in the silver case. The upper part flew back, revealing the miniature of a marvelously lovely woman, painted on ivory, in a delicate frame of chiseled gold. He handed it to the priest in silence.

"My wife," he said tenderly. Oh, that such melting tenderness could resound in the voice of rough Dex Weaver! "And a priest stole her from me."

Father Mullay examined the portrait with deepest interest.

"Ah, but the sweet soul of her shines in her eyes," said he. "But how comes it a priest would be stealing her?"

He turned toward Weaver in puzzled sympathy.

"'Tis not marrying her himself he'd be, and 'tis the priest's duty to join people together, not tear them apart!"

Weaver passed his hand wearily across his forehead. The deep cut, where the stitches had been taken, was still blue and swollen. His head throbbed with a sharp, vivid pain, but his face, lit by the wondrous smile, was as intense as a white flame.

"It was like this, sir," said he. "She was the daughter of a rich Spaniard in Mexico, not far across the border." His eyes were fixed on the priest's face, but he seemed to be gazing far beyond into the land of his memories. "He was a religious man, Don Robles, and a cruel one. I was a young chap then, and—and not so bad to look upon," he added in swift apology. "I was manager, too, of the Avenido mine—twenty thousand pesos a year. Shall I go on, sir?" he asked considerately. "Are you certain I'll not tire you?"

"Go on, go on!" admonished the priest eagerly. "I was but thinking how lovely she is—the wife!"

"Was," corrected Weaver patiently, "was! She died seven years ago; otherwise, how should I be here?"

"Ah well," he sighed, "I'll hurry up and tell the story in my own rough fashion. I saw Rosita and fell in love with her, madly. Every day when she went to mass, I followed her. I was not a Catholic, but I would have spent hours on my knees on red-hot stones for one look from her sweet eyes. I loved her!" He caught his breath sharply. "I'll skip all that," he added. "It's only opening the old wound. Strange enough, she loved me in return.

"I tried every way to meet her. I went to Don Robles again and again, and asked for her hand in marriage. And he cursed me for meeting her secretly, as I had done, cursed me for a blackguard, a desecrator of women—I, who was afraid to kiss the ground she walked upon—I worshiped her so! He was inexorable, uncompromising. He wouldn't even listen to me. She had been pledged since childhood to a cousin—a dissolute, rich ruffian in Spain. And so, you see, sir, there was only one thing to do—" he paused tellingly—"and I did it. I managed to win over her maid to help me.

"So, one dark night when all the family was asleep, Rosita crept out of the house between moonset and dawn, met me, and we rode across the border into El Paso and were married at daybreak. Now, sir," he said quietly, with lowered eyes, "I can't speak, even to you, of the heaven of days that followed—two wonderful, golden weeks such as man and woman never passed together since the days of the Garden of Eden!"

His voice shook with the intensity of emotion, then he was silent. Hearing a noise of footsteps in the corridor outside, he recovered himself, and hurried on with the recital.

"Late one afternoon," he continued, "I left her alone with the servants, while I rode to the city on business. We lived a mile or so from town in a white house—all roses and cooing pigeons and sunshine. I was only gone a few hours, and when I returned, sir, and entered the house, calling her name from room to room, she was gone, sir—she was gone!"

"Juana, her maid, told me—when she could stop her hysterical crying—that just at dusk, Padre Gonzales, the Catholic priest who was the confessor of the Robles family, had come to the house and told Rosita that her father was waiting to see her down at the end of the road, and if she would go and talk to him for a few moments, he was ready to forgive her and everything would be all right. The maid told me that when my wife got to the end of the garden—for Juana had followed her—two men joined the priest, seized Rosita, tied a scarf over her mouth, took her to a carriage which was standing near by in the shadow of some trees, and they galloped away before Juana could gather her wits to give the alarm. Her father had taken this way to get her back, and I never saw her again."

His head fell forward on his breast and the light seemed to die out of his eyes.

The priest reached across the coverlet and seized Weaver's hand in a tenderly sympathetic grasp. The light slid along the silver case lying on the bed unheeded.

"My heart bleeds for ye, me lad," said the priest gently, "and could you never get to her?"

Weaver pulled himself together with a start and answered in a tone of dull monotony.

"You see, sir, they put her in a convent, which was like a prison, far up in the mountains. She was a mere child, you know, sir—only nineteen—and in three months she died, pined away, I believe, of a broken

heart. I never had even a word from her. I saw the notice of her death in the newspapers—that was all. Then, of course, I went mad—raving, tearing mad. I tried to kill Robles, was arrested, broke jail, and that's why I came over with the army, and," he added dully, "so perhaps now, if I'm loco, you understand."

When the nurse opened the door just then, by the diffused light of the shaded lamp, she beheld Father Mullay hand something furtively to Weaver, which Weaver hastily thrust into his breast-pocket, and she saw Weaver's face break into a smile. It lit his fine blue eyes till they radiated with something kinder than kindness. It played around the corners of his mouth till the finely chiseled lips bowed into the curves of an Antinous.

"Heavens!" exclaimed the nurse to herself, her eyes staring wide in surprise. "The man is positively handsome. I wonder why I've never noticed it before."

"We're all feeling better now, nurse," said the priest gaily, pointing toward the window where a feeble ray of watery sunlight quivered through the dripping trees. "Why, look ye, even the weather has heartened up a bit!"

And so it was that next hot season, when the mercury scrambled up to the top of the thermometer, and the good people from Manila fled to the cool of the Baguio hills, they were unutterably amazed when they saw Father Mullay and Dex Weaver riding over the hills together, shoulder to shoulder, as thick as thieves.

And they heard, moreover, that Dex Weaver had made over to Father Mullay, as an outright gift, the famous Bok Lok mine, where the gold lies thick like plums in plum pudding.

CAUGHT

by GEORGE L. CATTON

I LAY in the birch not a rod from his boat and watched him the whole afternoon;
I saw what he caught with his worms and his float out there in the Barren Lagoon
And I cut across country to beat him to town, then we casually met in the store;
And I asked him his luck, expecting a frown, but his smile was as bland as of yore.

Said he: "'Twas a trout, the first one I caught, and he reeled off a good hundred feet;
I gave him the brake, and boys! how he fought! But the spring in the reel had him beat.
Then another bass took that dew worm of mine, and another trout, and then
An enormous big pike broke away with the line! I should judge he would weigh about ten."

I lay on the bank not a rod from his boat and watched him the whole afternoon;
I know what he caught with his worms and his float out there in the Barren Lagoon.
And he didn't know I was watching him there, never once did he glance at the birch;
He's the reverent Jones who leads us in prayer—he caught just one seven-inch perch!

The First Part of the Story Told Briefly in Story Form

I FIRST laid eyes on the lean, clean figure of young Anscombe, idler, big-game hunter, on that Spring morning in Pretoria, 1877, when Great Britain took formal possession of the Transvaal. A year later we met again, this time because of Anscombe's determination to hunt buffalo in the Lydenburg country back of Delagoa Bay.

I tried to dissuade him, for I knew the Basutos up-country were unfriendly; but the outcome was that I went as his guide.

From the flaming morn when we trekked out across the veld, till we entered the bush, far north, all went well. Then suddenly we came upon something which even gave me a start, and I have been in as many tight corners, and seen as many weird spectacles in the heart of Africa, I presume, as any man alive.

What startled me was a temple—a home there in the wilderness, built of snowy marble. But if the home seemed strange, a thousand times more mysterious were its two inhabitants, Marnham, an old man, and Dr. Todd, whose shifty eyes made me distrust him immediately.

It was at once plain they were anxious to be rid of us. Was it because of a mysterious Miss Heda Marnham who was expected at any time? Dr. Todd, it was plain, was not anxious to have her meet young Anscombe. Or did these forest-dwellers fear we might discover the reason for their living thus?

At any rate, we soon shook the dust of their yard from our feet, and began our hunting. But almost at the sound of our first shot we were ambushed by natives; and from a wounded black I learned that they had been informed of our coming by a white man.

All thought of fighting it out with the Basutos fled when Anscombe caught a bullet in his foot. We must win back to the Temple. We did. And Dr. Todd pronounced Anscombe's wound too serious to allow traveling for some days.

Then a strange thing happened which gave me a clue to the "trading" that Dr. Todd vaguely said was his and Marnham's reason for dwelling in the bush.

The Basutos had followed almost to the Temple. But instead of attacking they broke into song and spent the night in revelry. I knew they had somehow got hold of their greatest enemy—liquor. From this my thoughts snapped instantly to their weapons. Where did they get them? And what, besides their friendship, did they give in return?

I stumbled on the answer to the first question next morning—a box, hidden away in the bush back of the Temple, filled with rifles, powder, and spirits.

The second question, that of the payment given by the natives, Marnham cleared up the evening he and Dr. Todd taunted Anscombe and me into a card game as partners; and that same night I learned why two shrewd, brilliant men had ducked back to cover under the shadow of Zululand.

The traders lost, for Marnham poured down drink after drink once he found we were not to be easily beaten. Anscombe totaled up their debt—£749.

His face flaming with rage, Marnham staggered up.

"There's your pay!" he shouted, and he threw a handful of uncut diamonds upon the table. He was an illicit diamond buyer.

He shook his fist at Todd.

"It's your fault, you—you medical jail-bird!" he cried.

"Don't you dare call me that—you murderer!" gasped the doctor.

Marnham seized a decanter and hurled it full at Todd's head, missing by an eyelash. Then we intervened.

After we had induced the pair to retire, Anscombe examined the cards.

"Marked, by Jove!" he exclaimed.

"Shut up, you fool," I retorted. "I'd give a hundred pounds to be clear of this place. There'll be murder done yet over this business, and I only hope it won't be us."

And again I listened for night-sounds from the near-by natives, who I knew would cut the throats of any whites in Lydenburg at a word from the owners of the Temple.

Next morning, however, the quarrel was temporarily patched up, for Miss Heda, young, slender, fascinating, arrived. The girl and Anscombe became fast friends at once, while over the face of Dr. Todd when he saw them together came the look of a wild beast about to be robbed of its prey.

A few days after her arrival Heda came to me.

with the secret that I had guessed. She was engaged to a man she hated—Dr. Todd. Yet she must keep her promise, for the doctor had some powerful hold over her father, who, she feared, had once done something dreadful. And when she had finished I knew more than she thought, I knew she was in love with Anscombe.

I asked time to think, and when the girl left, I fell asleep. I dreamed I was once more in the Black Kloof in Zululand. In front of me squatted the old witch-doctor Zikali, the "Thing-that-should-never-have-been-born," whom I had not seen in years.

"So you are here again, Macumazahn," he said. "What do you seek from the Opener of Roads? Not Mameena. No, it is she who seeks you—she who has a hungry heart that does not forget."

"How can I meet a woman who is dead?" I demanded.

"Seek the answer in the hour of battle when the white men, your brothers, fall. Harken. When the storm bursts, bring hither the maiden Heddana, and the white lord, Mauriti. I shall be glad to see you, Macumazahn, for at last I am about to smite the House of Senzangacona and bring ruin and death upon the King of the Zulu Nation."

I awoke. And I knew my dream had pointed a way out of our terrible situation. We could flee to Zululand.

The climax came suddenly. Todd and Marnham quarreled bitterly one night. The next morning Marnham was found dead in his chair. Todd stood dazed before the corpse. With Marnham's death he had lost his hold over Heda. I knew he was desperate.

I turned the leaf of a blotting-book by Marnham's elbow, and on a sheet were written words in his hand:

Greater love hath no man than this——

Then I remembered a letter he had given me some time before with the request that I deposit it in a Pretoria bank against his death. It ran:

DEAR MR. QUATERMAIN:

I have remembered that those who quarrel with Dr. Todd are apt to die soon and suddenly. If I do not live, you will see that everything I own goes to my daughter, Heda.

It is my earnest hope that Heda may get clear of that scoundrel Todd and marry Mr. Anscombe. Sincerely yours,

H. A. MARNHAM.

Miss Heda bore up bravely, for she, like ourselves, feared Dr. Todd would play his last card. We were right.

From one of Todd's native patients I learned the Temple was to be attacked that night by Sekukuni and that it was the white medicine-man, Todd, who had told Sekukuni's people to kill us. In the meantime Todd disappeared.

Knowing two of us could not defend the Temple against the Basutos, Heda, Anscombe and Footsack, my native boy, packed the Cape-cart while I inspanned the horses. And so, since the hostile Basutos stood between us and the Transvaal, we drove off through the Yellow Wood Swamp toward Zululand and the old witch-doctor, Zikali.

I was riding ahead. The gloom of the swamp deepened, casting long, fantastic shadows across the path. Suddenly there came to my straining ears the sound of men's voices, raised in anger. I heard:

"Let go, or by Heaven——"

Then a furious laugh and other words:

"In five minutes the Kaffirs will be here. In ten you will be dead!"

I wheeled my horse and spurred toward the cart. As I rode round the last intervening patch of trees there came a shot.

I beheld the horses rearing and snorting. Holding their heads was Todd, who rocked on his feet. His face was distorted with pain and rage. He pitched forward into the mud, and as I glanced up I beheld Anscombe sitting on the wagon-seat, a smoking revolver in his hands.

There was no time for words. "Flog the horses and follow me!" I shouted, and off we went at a hard gallop along the native track. Far behind we could see flames of the burning Temple; the Basutos were at our heels.

As rapidly as I could, I told them of Zululand, of the dangers we must face, of Zikali whom I believed we could trust, of Cetewayo, the king, whom I had often befriended. Death lay behind us, therefore we must press on. The natives followed closely. We came to a swollen river which our horses swam. And so we escaped the Basutos and came into the land of the Swazi.

From the Swazi I learned that a war-cloud hung over Zululand. Cetewayo was likely, at any time, to fly at the throats of the English. The Swazi had been asked to aid the Zulus in this event, but had refused.

One morning there came to me a messenger from Zululand, a witch-doctoress named Nombé. She was tall and graceful, with great deep eyes and mysterious smile.

"I come from Zikali," she said. "Zikali now awaits you at the Black Kloof. It is your only hope of safety. For Zikali is about to wreak vengeance on Cetewayo and Cetewayo's house for all the wrongs it has done him.

"Come. Inspan your horses, Macumazahn, for I have done my business and am ready to start."

During the trip Nombé saw to it that we were isolated from each other nearly the whole time, why I could not fathom. It made me uneasy. Yet the happiness of Anscombe and Heda seemed complete.

In ten days we arrived at the Black Kloof, a deep ravine where dwelt Zikali the wizard. The weird place made me sad and I mentioned it to Nombé.

"It is the thought of one whom once you met here, one who is dead," she answered. "But I have the gift of vision, Macumazahn. I have seen the spirit of this woman lately haunting the Black Kloof, waiting for some one. She is tall and her face is proud. And she swears by a certain kiss you gave her that she will protect you."

I groaned. I knew old Zikali had instructed her to say this to impress me. Had the spirit of Mameena returned to Earth, I wondered. No, impossible!

Suddenly we rode round a corner of the Kloof and I saw the snowy-haired dwarf Zikali seated before his hut, known throughout the land for longer than any man remembered as "Opener of Roads."

After the frightened screams of Heda's maid, Kaatje, had been silenced, I approached the wizard.

"Now that you are gray, you return again," he said to me. "Tell your friends they will be cared for, then come into my hut."

He crawled into the hut and I followed. He crouched over the fire, his great head almost in the flame.

"My spies who are everywhere saw you with the dead man in the marble temple," he croaked. "I sent for you to protect you. Also because I need your counsel, as does Cetewayo, the king. I wished to see you before you saw Cetewayo. You know how I hate the House of Senzangacona which has given all its kings to Zululand: first because it crushed my tribe, the Dwandive, second because it named me 'Thing - that-should - never-have-been-born,' thirdly because for years I have had to match my cunning against the power of the royal house.

"Macumazahn, the hour is at hand. At last I am to be avenged. My cunning is to win. Cetewayo has quarreled with the English. He has killed their women, stolen their cattle. Now the Queen's man from the Cape asks of the Zulus great fines and that they lay down their spears forever."

"Will Cetewayo refuse and bring on war?"

"His decision rests in the balance," the wizard replied. "I wish you to turn the scale—to advise him to defy the English. You know the Zulus will lose. Therefore you will have done two useful things: you will have caused the fool Cetewayo and his house to be crushed, thus avenging me and forever removing the Zulu menace in South Africa."

I refused, indignant. But Zikali appeared not a bit surprised, so I knew there was a deeper scheme in his cunning old head. Suddenly he threw some powder into the flames.

I looked. And oh, Heaven! There before me, with outstretched arms and yearning face, stood Mameena, looking as she did that afternoon years before when I gave her the promised kiss that covered her taking of poison. The flame died. The vision disappeared.

I fled from the hut, Zikali's laugh ringing after me. In the cool night air I recovered and puzzled vainly over Zikali's object in bringing back to me that vision of Mameena.

On the way to the hut allotted to Anscombe and myself, Nombé stopped me.

"I sleep across the door of the lady Heddana's hut," she said. "For none may be safe and I will protect her."

This relieved me till I found Anscombe depressed by his surroundings. Then I, too, again began to feel creepy.

"That old villain of a witch-doctor is playing some of his tricks with Heda, I'm afraid," whispered Anscombe. "He never got us here unless he meant to use us."

I shook my head, but neither of us was reassured. Once I fell into a fitful sleep, only to awake with a start and peer out across the dying fire to Heda's hut.

Dawn broke and I crept forth to the fence that protected Zikali's great hut. Suddenly the gate was broken open and I found myself surrounded by a dozen Zulu warriors.

"I am Goza," declared their leader. "I come to take you before my king."

"But how about my friends?" I asked.

"White friends?" Goza demanded. "The order has gone forth that all whites in Zululand, except yourself and those here at the order of the king, shall be killed."

"You shall, then, have a blanket for each of your men if you do not mention my friends," I offered, and he eagerly accepted.

"Now come," Goza ordered, and I knew it would mean death to disobey. But before we left I managed to send this note to Anscombe:

> There is treachery afoot and I think Zikali is at the bottom of it. I'm being carried off to the king. Escape to Natal if you can. I think you can trust Nombé. Tell Zikali if harm comes to you through him I will kill him if I live. God save you both.—A. Q.

Later, on the journey, I learned that the great council of the nation was summoned to meet at the king's city, Ulundi, within a few days. At Ulundi, the king led me to his royal hut.

"So you have seen Zikali, father of doctors, master of spirits, Macumazahn," said Cetewayo. "He is to attend the great council."

Then the king repeated a message from Zikali, and I read in his eyes a deep fear of the old witch-doctor. The king went on to defend his late depredations against the English.

"And now the white queen demands that the sovereignty of the Zulu nation be destroyed, that I be reduced to a mere kraal-head. Macumazahn, if I do this will my people not kill me?"

I told him of the White Queen's power. He nodded. At length he said, "The council will decide," and I went away to my quarters.

A week passed and at length Zikali arrived at the Vale of Bones where executions had long been held. And in this vale he called the great council on the third night of the full moon.

I attended with Goza. All the great men of the nation were banked around the witch-doctor's fire. From the weird setting I knew it was to be the case of the Delphic Oracle with a priest instead of priestess.

"This place is holy to me," said Zikali, gazing around through the bone-strewn shadows. "On that cliff it was that Chaka, who was thy uncle, O King, brought my children to be killed."

He dug into the ground where he was squatting and drew forth a skull.

"This is the skull of my daughter Noma," he said.

Then, holding the white, gleaming thing before him, he went on to discuss with Cetewayo the series of events which had led the Zulus to the brink of war.

Speeches by native leaders followed, some favoring peace, others defiance to the British. The king dared take neither side, apparently. At last came the moment all expected: the council turned to Zikali for advice.

"You ask me, who am oldest and wisest of doctors, how this war will prosper," he croaked. "How can I answer without needful medicines which I have not with me? If you can wait six nights——"

"We can not!" cried the king. "If you have your boasted knowledge, you can speak now."

"So you think me an ancient cheat!" the witch-doctor retorted. "Well, even if I have no medicines, and stand before those who are too ignorant to lend me their council, I yet have one stone that I alone can throw. But it is terrible. It may send you all raving back to your wives."

He passed his hands over the fire.

"What is the plan? Let us hear that we may judge," said the prime minister in an awed voice.

"The plan of calling one from the dead and harkening to the voice of the dead," Zikali replied. "Is it your desire that I should draw water from this fount of wisdom, O King and Councilors?"

CHAPTER XVI

WAR

NOW men began to whisper together and Goza groaned at my side.

"Rather would I look down a live lion's throat than see the dead," he murmured, but I, who was anxious to learn how far Zikali would carry his tricks, contemptuously told him to be silent.

Presently the king called me to him and said—

"Macumazahn, you white men are reported to know all things. Tell me now, is it possible for the dead to appear?"

"I am not sure," I answered doubtfully; "some say that it is and some say that it is not possible."

"Well," said the king. "Have you ever seen one you knew in life after death?"

"No," I replied, "that is—yes. That is—I do not know. When you will tell me, King, where waking ends and sleep begins, then I will answer."

"Macumazahn," he exclaimed, "just now I announced that you were no liar, who perceive that after all you are a liar, for how can you both have seen, and not seen, the dead? Indeed I remember that you lied long ago, when you gave it out that the witch Mameena was not your lover, and afterwards showed that she was by kissing her before all men, for who kisses a woman who is not his lover, or his sister or his mother? Return, since you will not tell me the truth."

So I went back to my stool, feeling very small and yet indignant, for how was it possible to be definite about ghosts, or to explain the exact facts of the Mameena myth which clung to me like a wait-a-bit thorn.

Then after a little consultation Cetewayo said:

"It is our desire, O Opener of Roads, that you should draw wisdom from the fount of Death, if indeed you can do so. Now let any who are afraid depart and wait for us who are not afraid alone and in silence at the mouth of the kloof."

At this some of the audience rose, but after hesitating a little, sat down again. Only Goza actually took a step forward, but on my remarking that he would probably meet the dead coming up that way, collapsed, muttering something about my pistol, for the fool seemed to think I could shoot a spirit.

"If indeed I can do so," repeated Zikali in a careless fashion. "That is to be proved, is it not? Perhaps, too, it may be better for every one of you if I fail than if I succeed. Of one thing I warn you, should the dead appear, stir not, and above all touch not, for he who does either of these things will, I think, never live to look upon the sun again. But first let me try an easier fashion."

Then once again he took up the skull that he said had been his daughter's, and whispered to it, only to lay it down presently.

"It will not serve," he said with a sigh and shaking his locks. "Noma tells me that she died a child, one who had no knowledge of war or matters of policy, and that in all these things of the world she still remains a child. She says that I must seek some one who thought much of them; some one, too, who still lives in the heart of a man who is present here, if that be possible, since from such a heart alone can the strength be drawn to enable the dead to appear and speak. Now let there be silence—let there be silence, and wo to him that breaks it."

Silence there was indeed, and in it Zikali crouched himself down till his head almost rested on his knee, and seemed to go to sleep. He awoke again and chanted for half a minute or so in some language I could not understand. Then voices began to answer him, as it seemed to me from all over the kloof, also from the sky or rock above. Whether the effect was produced by ventriloquism or whether he had confederates posted at various points, I do not know.

At any rate this lord of "multitudes of spirits" seemed to be engaged in conversation with some of them. What is more, the thing was extremely well done, since each voice differed from the other; also I seemed to recognize some of them, Dingaan's for instance, and Panda's, yes, and that of Umbelazi the Handsome, the brother of the king whose death I witnessed down by the Tugela.

You will ask me what they said. I do not know. Either the words were confused or the events that followed have blotted them from my brain. All I remember is that each of them seemed to be speaking of the Zulus and their fate and to be very

anxious to refer further discussion of the matter to some one else. In short they seemed to talk under protest, or that was my impression, although Goza, the only person with whom I had any subsequent debate upon the subject, appeared to have gathered one that was different, though what it was I do not recall.

The only words that remained clear to me must, I thought, have come from the spirit of Chaka, or rather from Zikali or one of his myrmidons assuming that character. They were uttered in a deep full voice, spiced with mockery, and received by the wizard with *Sibonga*, or titles of praise, which I who am versed in Zulu history and idiom knew had only been given to the great king, and indeed since his death had become unlawful, not to be used. The words were:

"What, Thing-that-should-never-have-been-born, do you think yourself a Thing-that-should-never-die, that you still sit beneath the moon and weave witchcrafts as of old? Often have I hunted for you in the Underworld who have an account to settle with you, as you have an account to settle with me. So, so, what does it matter since we must meet at last, even if you hide yourself at the back of the furthest star?

"Why do you bring me up to this place where I see some whom I would forget? Yes, they build bone on bone and taking the red earth, mold it into flesh and stand before me as last I saw them newly dead. Oh! your magic is good, Spell-weaver, and your hate is deep and your vengeance is keen. No, I have nothing to tell you who today rule a greater people than the Zulus in another land. Who are these little men who sit before you? One of them has a look of Dingaan, my brother who slew me, yes, and wears his armlet. Is he the king? Answer not, for I do not care to know.

"Surely yonder withered thing is Siganada. I know his eye and the *Iziqu* on his breast. Yes, I gave it to him after the great battle with Zweede in which he killed five men. Does he remember it, I wonder? Greeting, Siganada; old as you are you have still twenty and one years to live; and then we will talk of the battle with Zweede. Let me be gone, this place burns my spirit, and in it there is a stench of mortal blood. Farewell, O conqueror!"

These were the words that I thought I heard Chaka say, though I daresay that I dreamt them. Indeed had it been otherwise, I mean had they really been spoken by Zikali, there would surely have been more in them, something that might have served his purpose, not mere talk which had all the inconsequence of a dream. Also no one else seemed to pay any particular attention to them, though this may have been because so many voices were sounding from different places at once, for as I have said, Zikali arranged his performance very well, as well as any medium could have done on a prepared stage in London.

In a moment, as if at a signal, the voices died away. Then other things happened.

To begin with I felt very faint, as if all the strength were being taken out of me. Some queer fancy got a hold of me. I don't quite know what it was, but it had to do with the Bible story of Adam when he fell asleep and a rib was removed from him and made into a woman. I reflected that I felt as Adam must have done when he came out of his trance after this terrific operation, very weak and empty. Also, as it chanced, presently I saw Eve—or rather a woman.

Looking at the fire in a kind of disembodied way, I perceived that dense smoke was rising from it, which smoke spread itself out like a fan. It thinned by degrees, and through the veil of smoke I perceived something else, namely, a woman very like one whom once I had known. There she stood, lightly clad enough, her fingers playing with the blue beads of her necklace, an inscrutable smile upon her face and her large eyes fixed on nothingness.

Oh! Heaven, I knew her, or rather thought I did at the moment, for now I am almost sure that it was Nombé, dressed, or undressed, for the part. That knowledge came with reflection, but then I could have sworn, being deceived by the uncertain light, that the long dead Mameena stood before us as she had seemed to stand before me in the hut of Zikali, radiating a kind of supernatural life and beauty.

A little wind arose, shaking the leaves of the aloes in the kloof; I thought it whispered—*Hail, Mameena!*

Some of the older men, too, among them a few who had seen her die, in trembling voices murmured, "It is Mameena," whereon Zikali scowled at them and they grew silent. As for the figure, it stood there patient and unmoved, like one who has all

time at its disposal, playing with the blue beads. I heard them tinkle against each other, which proves that it was human, for how could a wraith cause beads to tinkle, although it is true that Christmas-story ghosts are said to clank their chains?

Her eyes roved idly and without interest over the semicircle of terrified men before her. Then by degrees they fixed themselves upon the tree behind which I was crouching, whereon Goza sank paralyzed to the ground. She contemplated this tree for a while that seemed to me interminable; it reminded me of a setter pointing game it winded but could not see, for her whole frame grew intent and alert. She ceased playing with the beads and stretched out her slender hand toward me. Her lips moved. She spoke, saying:

"O Watcher-by-Night, is it thus you greet her to whom you have given strength to stand once more beneath the moon? Come hither and tell me, have you no kiss for one from whom you parted with a kiss?"

I heard. Without doubt the voice was the very voice of Mameena (so well had Nombé been instructed). Still I determined not to obey it, who would not be made a public laughing-stock for a second time in my life. Also I confess this jesting with the dead seemed to me somewhat unholy, and not on any account would I take a part in it.

All the company turned and stared at me, even Goza lifted his head and stared, but I sat still and contemplated the beauties of the night.

"If it is the spirit of Mameena, he will come," whispered Cetewayo to Umnyamana.

"Yes, yes," answered the Prime Minister, "for the rope of his love will draw again. He who has once kissed Mameena, *must* kiss her again when she asks."

Hearing this I grew furiously indignant and was about to break into explanations, when to my horror I found myself rising from that stool. I tried to cling to it, but, as it only came into the air with me, let it go.

"Hold me, Goza," I muttered, and he like a good fellow clutched me by the ankle, whereon I promptly kicked him in the mouth, at least my foot kicked him, not my will.

Now I was walking toward her like a man in his sleep, and as I came she stretched out her arms and smiled oh! as sweetly as an angel, though I felt quite sure that she was nothing of the sort.

Now I stood opposite to her alongside the fire of which the smoke smelt like roses at the dawn, and she seemed to bend toward me. With shame and humiliation I perceived that in another moment those arms would be about me. But somehow they never touched me; I lost sight of them in the rose-scented smoke, only the voice, which I could have sworn was that of Mameena, murmured in my ear—well, words known to her and me alone that I had never breathed to any living being, though of course I am aware now that they must have been known to somebody else also.

"Do you doubt me any longer?" went on the murmuring. "Say, am I Nombé now? or am I in truth that Mameena whose kiss forever thrills your lips and soul? Hearken, Macumazahn, for the time is short. In the rout of the great battle that shall be, do not fly with the white men, but set your face toward Ulundi. One who was your friend will guard you, and whoever dies, no harm shall come to you, now that the fire which burns in my heart has set all Zululand aflame. Hearken once more. Hans, the little yellow man who was named Light-in-Darkness, he who died among the Kendah people, sends you salutations and gives you praise. He bids me tell you that now of his own accord he renders to me, Mameena, the royal salute, because royal I must ever be; because also he and I who are so far apart are yet one in the love that is our life."

The smoke blew into my face, causing me to reel back. Cetewayo caught me by the arm, saying—

"Tell us, are the lips of the dead witch warm or cold?"

"I do not know," I groaned, "for I never touched her."

"How he lies! Oh! how he lies even about what our eyes saw," said Cetewayo reflectively as I blundered past him back to my seat, on which I sank half swooning.

When I got my wits again the figure that pretended to be Mameena was speaking, I suppose in answer to some question of Zikali's which I had not heard. It said:

"O Lord of the Spirits, you have called me from the land of Spirits to make reply as to two matters which have not yet happened upon the earth. These replies I will give, but no others, since the strength that I have borrowed returns whence it came. The first matter is, if there be war

between the White and Black, what will happen in the war?

"I see a plain ringed round with hills and on it a strange-shaped mound. I see a great battle; I see the white men go down like corn before a tempest; I see the spears of the *impis* redden; I see the white soldiers lie like leaves cut from a tree by frost. They were dead, all dead, save a handful that have fled away. I hear the *ingoma* of victory sung here at Ulundi. It is finished.

"The second matter is—what shall chance to the king? I see him tossed on the Black Water; I see him in a land full of houses, talking with a royal woman and her councilors. There, too, he conquers, for they offer him tribute of many gifts. I see him here, back here in Zululand, and hear him greeted with the royal salute. Last of all I see him dead, as men must die, and hear the voice of Zikali and the mourning of the women of his house. It is finished.

"Farewell, King Cetewayo, I pass to tell Panda, your father, how it fares with you. When last we parted did I not prophesy to you that we should meet again at the bottom of a gulf? Was it this gulf, think you, or another? One day you shall learn. Farewell, or fare ill, as it may happen!"

Once more the smoke spread out like a fan. When it thinned and drew together again, the shape was gone.

Now I thought that the Zulus would be so impressed by this very queer exhibition that they would seek no more supernatural guidance, but make up their minds for war at once. This, however, was just what they did not do.

As it happened, among the assembled chiefs was one who himself had a great repute as a witch-doctor, and therefore burned with jealousy of Zikali who appeared to be able to do things that he had never even attempted. This man leapt up and declared that all which they had seemed to hear and see was but cunning trickery, carried out after long preparation by Zikali and his confederates. The voices, he said, came from persons placed in certain spots, or sometimes were produced by Zikali himself. As for the vision, it was not that of a spirit but of a real woman, in proof of which he called attention to certain anatomical details of the figure.

Finally, with much sense, he pointed out that the Council would be mad to come to any decision upon such evidence, or to give faith to prophecies whereof the truth or falsity could only be known in the future.

Now a fierce debate broke out, the war party maintaining that the manifestations were genuine, the peace party that they were a fraud. In the end, as neither side would give way and as Zikali, when appealed to, sat silent as a stone, refusing any explanation, the king said—

"Must we sit here talking, talking, till daylight? There is but one man who can know the truth, that is Macumazahn. Let him deny it as he will, he was the lover of this Mameena while she was alive, for with my own eyes I saw him kiss her before she killed herself. It is certain, therefore, that he knows if the woman we seemed to see was Mameena or another, since there are things which a man never forgets. I propose, therefore, that we should question him and form our own judgment of his answer."

This advice, which seemed to promise a road out of a blind ally, met with instant acceptance.

"Let it be so," they cried with one voice, and in another minute I was once more conducted from behind my tree and set down upon the stool in front of the Council, with my back to the fire and Zikali, "that his eyes might not charm me."

"Now, Watcher-by-Night," said Cetewayo, "although you have lied to us in a certain matter, of this we do not think much, since it is one upon which both men and women always lie, as every judge will know. Therefore we still believe you to be an honest man, as your dealings have proved for many years. As an honest man, therefore, we beg you to give us a true answer to a plain question. Was the shape we saw before us just now a woman or a spirit, and if a spirit, was it the ghost of Mameena, the beautiful witch who died near this place nearly the quarter of a hundred years ago, she whom you loved, or who loved you, which is just the same thing, since a man always loves a woman who loves him, or thinks that he does?"

Now after reflection I replied in these words and as conscientiously as I could:

"King and Councilors, I do not know if what we all saw was a ghost or a living person, but, as I do not believe in ghosts, or at any rate that they come back to the world on such errands, I conclude that it

was a living person. Still, it may have been neither, but only a mere picture produced before us by the arts of Zikali. So much for the first question. Your second is—was this spirit or woman or shadow, that of her whom I remember meeting in Zululand many years ago? King and Councilors, I can only say that it was very like her. Still, one handsome young woman often greatly resembles another of the same age and coloring. Further, the moon gives an uncertain light, especially when it is tempered by smoke from a fire.

"Lastly, memory plays strange tricks with all of us, as you will know if you try to think of the face of any one who has been dead for more than twenty years. For the rest, the voice seemed similar, the beads and ornaments seemed similar, and the figure repeated to me certain words which I thought I alone had heard come from the lips of her who is dead. Also she gave me a strange message from another who is dead, referring to a matter which I believed was known only to me and that other. Yet Zikali is very clever and may have learned these things in some way unguessed by me, and what he has learned, others may have learned also.

"King and Councilors, I do not think that what we saw was the spirit of Mameena. I think it a woman not unlike to her who had been taught her lesson. I have nothing more to say, and therefore I pray you not to ask me any further questions about Mameena of whose name I grow weary."

At this point Zikali seemed to wake out of his indifference, or his torpor, for he looked up and said darkly:

"It is strange that the cleverest are always those who first fall into the trap. They go along, gazing at the stars at night, and forget the pit which they themselves have dug in the morning. O-ho-ho! Ohoho!"

Now the wrangling broke out afresh. The peace party pointed triumphantly to the fact that I, the white man who ought to know, put no faith in this apparition, which was therefore without doubt a fraud. The war party on the other hand declared that I was deceiving them for reasons of my own, one of which would be that I did not wish to see the Zulus eat up my people.

So fierce grew the debate that I thought it would end in blows and perhaps in an attack on myself or Zikali who all the while sat quite careless and unmoved, staring at the moon. At length Cetewayo shouted for silence, spitting, as was his habit when angry.

"Make an end," he cried, "lest I cause some of you to grow quiet for ever," whereon the recriminations ceased. "Opener of Roads," he went on, "many of those who are present think like Macumazahn here, that you are but an old cheat, though whether or no I be one of these I will not say. They demand a sign of you that none can dispute, and I demand it also before I speak the word of peace or war. Give us then that sign, or begone to whence you came and show your face no more at Ulundi."

"What sign does the Council require, son of Panda?" asked Zikali quietly. "Let them agree on one together and tell me now at once, for I who am old grow weary and would sleep. Then if it can be given I will give it; and if I can not give it, I will get me back to my own house and show my face no more at Ulundi, who do not desire to listen again to fools who babble like contending waters round a stone and yet never stir the stone because they run two ways at once."

Now the Councilors stared at each other, for none knew what sign to ask. At length old Siganandа said:

"O King, it is well known that the Black One who went before you had a certain little assegai handled with the royal red wood, which drank the blood of many. It was with this assegai that Mopo his servant, who vanished from the land after the death of Dingaan, let out the life of the Black One at the kraal Duguza, but what became of it afterward none have heard for certain. Some say that it was buried with the Black One, some that Mopo stole it. Others that Dingaan and Umhlagana burned it. Still a saying rose like a wind in the land that when that spear shall fall from heaven at the feet of the king who reigns in the place of the Black One, then the Zulus shall make their last great war and win a victory of which all the world shall fear. Now let the Opener of Roads give us this sign of the falling of the Black One's spear and I shall be content."

"Would you know the spear if it fell?" asked Cetewayo.

"I should know it, O King, who have often held it in my hand. The end of the

haft is gnawed, for when he was angry the Black One used to bite it. Also a thumb's length from the blade is a black mark made with hot irons. Once the Black One made a bet with one of his captains that at a distance of ten paces he would throw the spear deeper into the body of a chief whom he wished to kill, than the captain could. The captain threw first, for I saw him with my eyes, and the spear sank to that place on the shaft where the mark is, for the Black One burned it there. Then the Black One threw and the spear went through the body of the chief who, as he died, called to him that he too should know the feel of it in his heart, as indeed he did."

I think that Cetewayo was about to assent to this suggestion, since he who desired peace believed it impossible that Zikali should suddenly cause this identical spear to fall from heaven. But Umnyamana, the Prime *Induna*, interposed hurriedly:

"It is not enough, O King. Zikali may have stolen the spear, for he was living and at the kraal Duguza at that time. Also he may have put about the prophecy whereof Sigananda speaks, or at least so men would say. Let him give us a greater sign than this that all may be content, that whether we make war or peace it may be with a single mind. Now it is known that we Zulus have a guardian spirit who watches over us from the skies, she who is called Nomkubulwana, or by some the Inkosazana-y-Zulu, the Princess of Heaven.

"It is known also that this princess, who is white of skin and ruddy-haired, appears always before great things happen in our land. Thus she appeared to Mopo before the Black One died. Also she appeared to a number of children before the battle of the Tugela. It is said, too, that but lately she appeared to a woman near the coast and warned her to cross the Tugela because there would be war, though this woman can not now be found. Let the Opener of Roads call down Nomkubulwana before our eyes from heaven and we will admit, every man of us, that this is a sign which cannot be questioned."

"And if he does this thing, which I hold no doctor in the world can do, what shall it signify?" asked Cetewayo.

"O King," answered Umnyamana, "if he does so, it shall signify war and victory. If he does not do so, it shall signify peace, and we will bow our heads before the *Amalungwana basi bodwe*" (the little English, used as a term of derision).

"Do all agree?" asked Cetewayo.

"We agree," answered every man, stretching out his hand.

"Then, Opener of Roads, it stands thus: If you can call Nomkubulwana, should there be such a spirit, to appear before our eyes, the Council will take it as a sign that the Heavens direct us to fight the English."

So spoke Cetewayo, and I noted a tone of triumph in his voice, for his heart shrank from this war, and he was certain that Zikali could do nothing of the sort. Still, the opinion of the nation, or rather of the army, was so strong in favor of it that he feared lest his refusal might bring about his deposition, if not his death. From this dilemma the supernatural test suggested by the Prime Minister and approved by the Council that represented the various tribes of the people, seemed to offer a path of escape. So I read the situation, as I think, rightly.

Upon hearing these words for the first time that night Zikali seemed to grow disturbed.

"What do my ears hear?" he exclaimed excitedly. "Am I the *Umkulukulu*, the Great Great (i. e., God) himself, that it should be asked of me to draw the Princess of Heaven from beyond the stars, she who comes and goes like the wind, but like the wind can not be commanded? Do they hear that if she will not come to my beckoning, then the great Zulu people must put a yoke upon their shoulders and be as slaves? Surely the king must have been listening to the doctrines of those English teachers who wear a white ribbon tied about their necks, and tell us of a god who suffered himself to be nailed to a cross of wood, rather than make war upon his foes, one whom they call the Prince of Peace.

"Times have changed indeed since the days of the Black One. Yes, generals have become like women; the captains of the *impis* are set to milk the cows. Well, what have I to do with all this? What does it matter to me who am so very old that only my head remains above the level of the earth, the rest of me being buried in the grave, who am not even a Zulu to boot, but a Dwandwe, one of the despised Dwandwe whom the Zulus mocked and conquered?

"Hearken to me, Spirits of the House of

Senzangacona"—here he addressed about a dozen of Cetewayo's ancestors by name, going back for many generations. "Hearken to me, O Princess of Heaven, appointed by the Great-Great to be the guardian of the Zulu race. It is asked that you should appear, should it be your wish to signify to these your children that they must stand upon their feet and resist the white men who already gather upon their borders. And should it be your wish that they should lay down their spears and go home to sleep with their wives and hoe the gardens while the white men count the cattle and set each to his work upon the roads, then that you should not appear.

"Do what you will, O Spirits of the House of Senzangacona, do what you will, O Princess of Heaven. What does it matter to the Thing-that-never-should-have-been-born, who soon will be as though he never had been born, whether the House of Senzangacona and the Zulu people stand or fall? I, the old doctor, was summoned here to give counsel. I gave counsel, but it passed over the heads of these wise ones like a shadow of which none took note. I was asked to prophesy of what would chance if war came. I called the dead from their graves; they came in voices, and one of them put on the flesh again and spoke from the lips of flesh. The white man to whom she spoke denied her who had been his love, and the wise ones said that she was a cheat, yes, a doll that I had dressed up to deceive them. This spirit that had put on flesh, told of what would chance in the war, if war there were, and what would chance to the king, but they mock at the prophecy and now they demand a sign.

"Come then, Nomkubulwana, and give them the sign if you will and let there be war. Or stay away and give them no sign if you will, and let there be peace. It is nought to me, nought to the Thing-that-should-never-have-been-born."

Thus he rambled on, as it occurred to me who watched and listened, talking against time. For I observed that while he spoke a cloud was passing over the face of the moon, and that when he ceased speaking it was quite obscured by this cloud, so that the Vale of Bones was plunged in a deep twilight that was almost darkness. Further, in a nervous kind of way, he did something more to his wizard's fire which again caused it to throw out a fan of smoke that hid him and the execution rock in front of which he sat.

THE cloud floated by and the moon came out as if from an eclipse; the smoke of the fire, too, thinned by degrees. As it melted and the light grew again, I became aware that something was materializing, or had appeared on the point of the rock above us.

A few seconds later, to my wonder and amaze, I perceived that this something was the spirit-like form of a white woman which stood quite still upon the very point of the rock. She was clad in some garment of gleaming white cut low upon her breast, that may have been of linen, but from the way it shone, suggested that it was of glittering feathers, egrets' for instance. Her ruddy hair was outspread, and in it, too, something glittered, like mica or jewels. Her feet and milk-hued arms were bare and poised in her right hand was a little spear.

Nor did I see alone, since a moan of fear and worship went up from the Councillors. Then they grew silent and stared and stared.

Suddenly Zikali lifted his head and looked at them through the thin flame of the fire which made his eyes shine like those of a tiger or of a cornered baboon.

"At what do you gaze so hard, King and Councilors?" he asked. "I see nothing. At what then do you gaze so hard?"

"On the rock above you stands a white spirit in her glory. It is the Inkosazana herself," muttered Cetewayo.

"Has she come then?" mocked the old wizard. "Nay, surely it is but a dream, or another of my tricks; some black woman painted white that I have smuggled here in my medicine-bag, or rolled up in the blanket on my back. How can I prove to you that this is not another cheat like to that of the spirit of Mameena whom the white man, her lover, did not know again? Go near to her you must not, even if you could, seeing that if by chance she should not be a cheat, you would die, every man of you, for wo to him whom Nomkubulwana touches. How then, how?

"Ah! I have it. Doubtless in his pocket Macumazahn yonder hides a little gun, Macumazahn who with such a gun can cut a reed in two at thirty paces, or shave the hair from the chin of a man, as is well known in the land. Let him then take his little

gun and shoot at that which you say stands upon the rock. If it be a black woman painted white, doubtless she will fall down dead, as so many have fallen from that rock. But if it be the Princess of Heaven, then the bullet will pass through her or turn aside and she will take no harm, though whether Macumazahn will take any harm is more than I can say."

Now when they heard this, many remained silent, but some of the peace party began to clamor that I should be ordered to shoot at the apparition.

At length Cetewayo seemed to give way to this pressure. I say seemed, because I think he wished to give way. Whether or not a spirit stood before him, he knew no more than the rest, but he did know that unless the vision were proved to be mortal he would be driven into war with the English. Therefore he took the only chance that remained to him.

"Macumazahn," he said, "I know you have your pistol on you, for only the other day you brought it into my presence, and through light and darkness you nurse it as a mother does her firstborn. Now, since the Opener of Roads desires it, I command you to fire at that which seems to stand above us. If it be a mortal woman, she is a cheat and deserves to die. If it be a spirit from heaven it can take no harm. Nor can you take harm who only do that which you must."

"Woman or spirit, I will not shoot, King," I answered.

"Is it so? What! Do you defy me, White Man? Do so if you will, but learn that then your bones shall whiten here in this Vale of Bones. Yes, you shall be the first of the English to go below," and turning, he whispered something to two of the Councilors.

Now I saw that I must either obey or die. For a moment my mind grew confused in face of this awful alternative. I did not believe that I saw a spirit. I believed that what stood above me was Nombé, cunningly tricked out with some native pigments which at that distance and in that light made her look like a white woman. For oddly enough at that time the truth did not occur to me, perhaps because I was too surprised.

Well, if it were Nombé, she deserved to be shot for playing such a trick, and what is more her death, by revealing the fraud of Zikali, would perhaps avert a great war. But then why did he make the suggestion that I should be commanded to fire at this figure? Slowly I drew out my pistol and brought it to the full cock, for it was loaded.

"I will obey, King," I said, "to save myself from being murdered. But on your head be all that may follow from this deed."

Then it was for the first time that a new idea struck me so clearly that I believe it was conveyed direct from Zikali's brain to my own. *I might shoot, but there was no need for me to hit.* After that everything grew plain.

"King," I said, "if yonder be a mortal, she is about to die. Only a spirit can escape my aim. Watch now the center of her forehead, for there the bullet will strike!"

I lifted the pistol and appeared to cover the figure with much care. As I did so, even from that distance I thought I saw a look of terror in its eyes. Then I fired, with a little jerk of the wrist sending the ball a good yard above her head.

"She is unharmed," cried a voice. "Macumazahn has missed her."

"Macumazahn does not miss," I replied loftily. "If that at which he aimed is unharmed, it is because it can not be hit."

"O-ho-o!" laughed Zikali. "The White Man who does not know the taste of his own love's lips, says that he has fired at that which can not be hit. Let him try again. No, let him choose another target. The Spirit is the Spirit, but he who summoned her may still be a cheat. There is another bullet in your little gun, White Man; see if it can pierce the heart of Zikali, that the King and Council may learn whether he be a true prophet, the greatest of all the prophets that ever was, or whether he be but a common cheat."

Now a sudden rage filled me against this old rascal. I remembered how he had brought Mameena to her death, when he thought that it would serve him, and since then filled the land with stories concerning her and me, that met me whichever way I turned.

I remembered that for years he had plotted to bring about the destruction of the Zulus, and to further his dark ends, was now engaged in causing a fearful war which would cost the lives of thousands. I remembered that he had trapped me into Zululand and then handed me over to

Cetewayo, separating me from my friends who were in my charge, and for aught I knew, giving them to death. Surely the world would be well rid of him.

"Have your will," I shouted and covered him with the pistol.

Then there came into my mind a certain saying—"Judge not that ye be not judged." Who and what was I that I should dare to arraign and pass sentence upon this man who, after all, had suffered many wrongs?

As I was about to fire I caught sight of some bright object flashing toward the king from above, and instantaneously shifted my aim and pressed the trigger. The thing, whatever it might be, flew in two. One part of it fell upon Zikali, the other part traveled on and struck Cetewayo upon the knee.

There followed a great confusion and a cry of "The king is stabbed!" I ran forward to look and saw the blade of a little assegai lying on the ground and on Cetewayo's knee a slight cut from which blood trickled.

"It is nothing," I said, "a scratch, no more, though had not the spear have been stopped in its course it might have been otherwise."

"Yes," said Zikali, "but what was it that caused the cut? Take this, Sigananda, and tell me what it may be," and he threw toward him a piece of red wood.

Sigananda looked at it. "It is the haft of the Black One's spear," he cried, "which the bullet of Macumazahn has severed from the blade."

"Aye," said Zikali, "and the blade has drawn the blood of the Black One's child. Read me this omen, Sigananda, or ask it of her who stands above you."

Now all looked to the rock, but it was empty. The figure had vanished.

"Your word, King," said Zikali. "Is it for peace or war?"

Cetewayo looked at the assegai, looked at the blood trickling from his knee, looked at the faces of the Councillors.

"Blood calls for blood," he said. "My word is—*War!*"

CHAPTER XVII

KAATJE BRINGS NEWS

ZIKALI burst into one of his peals of laughter, so unholy that it caused the blood in me to run cold.

"The king's word is *war*," he cried. "Let Nomkubulwana take that word back to heaven. Let Macumazahn take it to the White Men. Let captains cry it to the regiments and let the world grow red. The king has chosen, though mayhap, had I been he, I should have chosen otherwise; yet what am I but a hollow reed stuck in the ground up which the spirits speak to men? It is finished, and I, too, am finished for a while. Farewell, O King! Where shall we meet again, I wonder? On the earth or under it? Farewell, Macumazahn! I know where we shall meet, though you do not. O King, I return to my own place. I pray you to command that none come near me or trouble me with words, for I am spent."

"It is commanded," said Cetewayo.

As he spoke the fire went out mysteriously, and the wizard rose and hobbled off at a surprising pace round the corner of the projecting rock.

"Stay!" I called. "I would speak with you;" but although I am sure he heard me, he did not stop or look round. I sprang up to follow him, but at some sign from Cetewayo two *indunas* barred my way.

"Did you not hear the king's command, White Man?" one of them asked coldly, and the tone of his question told me that war having been declared, I was now looked upon as a foe.

I was about to answer sharply when Cetewayo himself addressed me.

"Macumazahn," he said, "you are now my enemy, like all your people, and from sunrise tomorrow morning your safe-conduct here ends, for if you are found at Ulundi two hours after that time, it will be lawful for any man to kill you. Yet as you are still my guest, I will give you an escort to the borders of the land. Moreover, you shall take a message from me to the queen's officers and captains. It is—that I will send an answer to their demands upon the point of an assegai.

"Yet add this, that not I but the English, to whom I have always been a friend, sought this war. If Sompseu had suffered me to fight the Boers as I wished to do, it would never have come about. But he threw the queen's blanket over the Transvaal and stood upon it, and now he declares that lands which were always the property of the Zulus, belong to the Boers. Therefore I take back all the promises which I made

to him when he came hither to call me king in the queen's name, and no more do I call him my father. As for the disbanding of my *impis*, let the English disband them if they can. I have spoken."

"And I have heard," I answered, "and will deliver your words faithfully, though I hold, King, that they come from the lips of one whom the heavens have made mad."

At this bold speech some of the Councilors started up with threatening gestures. Cetewayo waved them back, and answered quietly:

"Perhaps it was the queen of heaven who stood on yonder rock who made me mad. Or perhaps she made me wise, as being the spirit of our people she should surely do. That is a question which the future will decide, and if ever we should meet after it is decided, we will talk it over. Now, *hamba gachle!* (go in peace)."

"I hear the king and I will go, but first I would speak with Zikali."

"Then, White Man, you must wait till this war is finished, or till you meet him in the Land of Spirits. Goza, lead Macumazahn back to his hut and set a guard about it. At the dawn a company of soldiers will be waiting with orders to take him to the border. You will go with him and answer for his safety with your life. Let him be well treated on the road as my messenger."

Then Cetewayo rose and stood while all present gave him the royal salute, after which he walked away down the kloof. I remained for a moment, making pretense to examine the blade of the little assegai that had been thrown by the figure on the rock, which I had picked from the ground. This historical piece of iron which I have no doubt is the same that Chaka always carried, wherewith, too, he is said to have killed his mother, Nandie, by the way I still possess, for I slipped it into my pocket and none tried to take it from me.

Really, however, I was wondering whether I could in any way gain access to Zikali, a problem that was settled for me by a sharp request to move on, uttered in a tone which admitted of no further argument.

Well, I trudged back to my hut in the company of Goza, who was so overcome by all the wonders he had seen that he could scarcely speak. Indeed, when I asked him what he thought of the figure that had appeared upon the rock, he replied petulantly that it was not given to him to know whence spirits came or of what stuff they were made, which showed me that he at any rate believed in its supernatural origin and that it had appeared to direct the Zulus to make war. This was all I wanted to find out, so I said nothing more, but gave up my mind to thought of my own position and difficulties.

Here I was, ordered on pain of death to depart from Ulundi at the dawn. And yet how could I obey without seeing Zikali and learning from him what had happened to Anscombe and Heda, or at any rate without communicating with him?

Once more only did I break silence, offering to give Goza a gun if he would take a message from me to the great wizard. But with a shake of his big head, he answered that to do so would mean death, and guns were of no good to a dead man since, as I had shown myself that night, they had no power to shoot a spirit.

This closed the business on which I need not have troubled to enter, since an answer to all my questionings was at hand.

We reached the hut where Goza gave me over to the guard of soldiers, telling their officer that none were to be permitted to enter it save myself and that I was not to be permitted to come out of it until he, Goza, came to fetch me a little before the dawn.

The officer asked if any one else was to be permitted to come out, a question that surprised me, though vaguely, for I was thinking of other things. Then Goza departed, remarking that he hoped I should sleep better than he would, who "felt spirits in his bones and did not care to kiss them as I seemed to do."

I replied facetiously, thinking of the bottle of brandy, that ere long I meant to feel them in my stomach, whereat he shook his head again with the air of one whom nothing connected with me could surprise, and vanished.

I crawled into the hut and put the board over the beehole-like entrance behind me. Then I began to hunt for the matches in my pocket and pricked my finger with the point of Chaka's historical assegai. While I was sucking it, to my amazement I heard the sound of some one breathing on the further side of the hut.

At first I thought of calling the guard, but on reflection found the matches and

lit the candle which stood by the blankets that served me as a bed. As soon as it burned up I looked toward the sound, and to my horror perceived the figure of a sleeping woman, which frightened me so much that I nearly dropped the candle.

To tell the truth, so obsessed was I with Zikali and his ghosts that for a few moments it occurred to me that this might be that shape with which I had talked an hour or two before. I mean her who had seemed to resemble the long-dead lady Mameena, or rather the person made up to her likeness, come here to continue our conversation. At any rate I was sure, and rightly, that here was more of the handiwork of Zikali who wished to put me in some dreadful position for reasons of his own.

Pulling myself together I advanced upon the lady, only to find myself no wiser, since she was totally covered by a kaross. Now what was to be done? To escape, of which, of course, I had thought at once, was impossible since it meant an assegai in my ribs. To call to the guard for help seemed indiscreet, for who knew what those fools might say? To kick or shake her would undoubtedly be rude and, if it chanced to be the person who had played Mameena, would certainly provoke remarks that I should not care to face. There seemed to be only one resource, to sit down and wait till she woke up.

This I did for quite a long time, till at last the absurdity of the position and, I will admit, my own curiosity, overcame me, especially as I was very tired and wanted to go to sleep.

So, advancing very gingerly, I turned down the kaross from over the head of the sleeping woman, much wondering whom I should see, for what man is there whom a veiled woman does not interest? Indeed, does not half the interest of woman lie in the fact that her nature is veiled from man, in short a mystery which he is always seeking to solve at his peril, and I might add, never succeeds in solving?

Well, I turned down that kaross and next instant stepped back amazed and, to tell the truth, somewhat disappointed, for there with her mouth open, lay no wondrous and spiritual Mameena, but the stout, earthly and most prosaic—Kaatje!

"Confound the woman!" thought I to myself. "What is she doing here?"

Then I remembered how wrong it was to give way to a sense of romantic disappointment at such a time, though as a matter of fact it is always in a moment of crisis or of strained nerves that we are most open to the insidious advances of romance. Also that there was no one on earth, or beyond it, whom I ought more greatly to have rejoiced to see. I had left Kaatje with Anscombe and Heda; therefore Kaatje could tell me what had become of them. And—at this moment my heart sank—why was she here in this most inappropriate meeting-place, alone?

Feeling that these were questions which must be answered at once, I prodded Kaatje in the ribs with my toe until, after a good deal of prodding, she awoke, sat up and yawned, revealing an excellent set of teeth in her cavernous, quarter-caste mouth. Then perceiving a man she opened that mouth even wider, as I thought with the idea of screaming for help. But here I was first with her, for before a sound could issue I had filled it full with the corner of the kaross, exclaiming in Dutch as I did so:

"Idiot of a woman, do you not know the Heer Quatermain when you see him?"

"Oh! Baas," she answered, "I thought you were some wicked Zulu come to do me a mischief." Then she burst into tears and sobs which I could not stop for at least three minutes.

"Be quiet, you fat fool!" I cried exasperated, "and tell me, where are your mistress and the Heer Anscombe?"

"I don't know, Baas, but I hope in Heaven" (Kaatje was some kind of a Christian), she replied between her sobs.

"In Heaven! What do you mean?" I asked horrified.

"I mean, Baas, that I hope they are in Heaven, because when last I saw them they were both dead, and dead people must be either in Heaven or hell, and Heaven, they say, is better than hell."

"Dead! Where did you see them dead?"

"In that Black Kloof, Baas, some days after you left us and went away. The old baboon man who is called Zikali gave us leave through the witch-woman, Nombé, to go also. So the Baas Anscombe set to work to inspan the horses, the Missie Heda helping him, while I packed the things. When I had nearly finished Nombé came, smiling like a cat that has caught two mice, and beckoned to me to follow her. I went

and saw the cart inspanned with the four horses all looking as though they were asleep, for their heads hung down. Then after she had stared at me for a long while Nombé led me past the horses into the shadow of the overhanging cliff. There I saw my mistress and the Baas Anscombe lying side by side quite dead."

"How do you know that they were dead?" I asked. "What had killed them?"

"I know that they were dead because they *were* dead, Baas. Their mouths and eyes were open and they lay upon their backs with their arms stretched out. The witchwoman, Nombé, said some Kaffirs had come and strangled them and then gone away again, or so I understood who can not speak Zulu so very well. Who the Kaffirs were or why they came she did not say."

"Then what did you do?" I asked.

"I ran back to the hut, Baas, fearing lest I should be strangled also, and wept there till I grew hungry. When I came out of it again they were gone. Nombé showed me a place under a tree where the earth was disturbed. She said that they were buried there by order of her master, Zikali. I don't know what became of the horses or the cart."

"And what happened to you afterward?"

"Baas, I was kept for several days, I can not remember how many, and only allowed out within the fence round the huts. Nombé came to see me once, bringing this," and she produced a package sewn up in a skin. "She said that I was to give it to you with a message that those whom you loved were quite safe with one who is greater than any in the land, and therefore that you must not grieve for them whose troubles were over.

"I think it was two nights after this that four Zulus came, two men and two women, and led me away, as I thought to kill me. But they did not kill me; indeed they were very kind to me, although when I spoke to them they pretended not to understand. They took me a long journey, traveling for the most part in the dark and sleeping in the day. This evening when the sun set they brought me through a Kaffir town and thrust me into the hut where I am without speaking to any one. Here, being very tired, I went to sleep, and that is all."

And quite enough too, thought I to myself. Then I put her through a cross-examination, but Kaatje was a stupid woman although a good and faithful servant, and all her terrible experiences had not sharpened her intelligence. Indeed, when I pressed her she grew utterly confused, began to cry, thereby taking refuge in the last impregnable female fortification, and sniveled out that she could not bear to talk of her dear mistress any more. So I gave it up, and two minutes later she was literally snoring, being very tired, poor thing.

Now I tried to think matters out as well as this disturbance would allow, for nothing hinders thought so much as snores. But what was the use of thinking? There was her story to take or to leave, and evidently the honest creature believed what she said. Further, how could she be deceived on such a point?

She swore that she had seen them dead and afterward had seen their graves. Moreover, there was confirmation in Nombé's message which could not well have been invented, that spoke of their being well in the charge of a "Great One," a term by which the Zulus designate God, with all their troubles finished. The reason and manner of their end were left unrevealed. Zikali might have murdered them for his own purposes, or the Zulus might have killed them in obedience to the king's order that no white people in the land were to be allowed to live. Or perhaps the Basutos from Sekukuni's country, with whom the Zulus had some understanding, had followed and done them to death; indeed, the strangling sounded more Basuto than Zulu—if they were really strangled.

I bethought me of the package and opened it, only to find another apparent proof of their end, for it contained Heda's jewels as I had found them in the bag in the safe; also a spare gold watch belonging to Anscombe with his coat-of-arms engraved upon it. That which he wore was of silver and no doubt was buried with him, since for superstitious reasons the natives would not have touched anything on his person after death.

This seemed to me to settle the matter, presumptively at any rate, since to show that robbery was not the cause of their murder, their most valuable possessions which were not upon their persons had been sent to me, their friend.

So this was the end of all my efforts to

secure the safety and well-being of that most unlucky pair. I wept when I thought of it there in the darkness of the hut, for the candle had burned out, and, going on to my knees, put up an earnest prayer for the welfare of their souls; also that I might be forgiven my folly in leading them into such danger. And yet I did it for the best, trying to judge wisely in the light of such experience of the world as I possessed. Now alas! When I am old I have come to the conclusion that those things which one tries to do for the best one generally does wrong, because nearly always there is some tricky fate at hand to mar them, which in this instance was named Zikali. The fact is, I suppose, that man who thinks himself a free agent, can scarcely be so called, at any rate so far as immediate results are concerned. But that is a dangerous doctrine about which I will say no more, for I daresay that he is engaged in weaving a great life-pattern of which he only sees the tiniest piece.

One thing comforted me a little. If these two were dead I could now leave Zululand without qualms. Of course I was obliged to leave in any case; or die, but somehow that fact would not have eased my conscience. Indeed I think that had I believed they still lived, in this way or in that I should have tried not to leave, because I should have thought it for the best to stay to help them, whereby in all human probability I should have brought about my own death without helping them at all.

Well, it had fallen out otherwise and there was an end. Now I could only hope that they had gone to some place where there are no more troubles, even if, at the worst, it were a place of rest too deep for dreams.

Musing thus at last I dozed off, for I was so tired that I think I should have slept although execution awaited me at the dawn instead of another journey. I did not sleep well because of that snoring female on the other side of the hut whose presence outraged my sense of propriety and caused me to be invaded by prophetic dreams of the talk that would ensue among those scandal-mongering Zulus.

Yes, it was of this I dreamed, not of the great dangers that threatened me or of the terrible loss of my friends, perhaps because to many men, of whom I suppose I am one, the fear of scandal, or of being the object of public notice, is more than the fear of danger or the smart of sorrow.

So the night wore away, till at length I woke to see the gleam of dawn penetrating the smoke-hole and dimly illuminating the recumbent form of Kaatje, which to me looked most unattractive. Presently I heard a discreet tapping on the doorboard of the hut which I at once removed, wriggling swiftly through the hole, careless in my misery as to whether I met an assegai the other side of it or not. Without a guard of eight soldiers was standing, and with them Goza, who asked me if I were ready to start.

"Quite," I answered, "as soon as I have saddled my horse," which by the way had been led up to the hut.

Very soon this was done, for I brought out most of my few belongings with me and the bag of jewels was in my pocket. Then it was that the officer of the guard, a thin and melancholy-looking person, said in a hollow voice addressing Goza:

"The orders are that the white man's wife is to go with him. Where is she?"

"Where a man's wife should be, in his hut I suppose," answered Goza sleepily.

Rage filled me at the words. Seldom do I remember being so angry.

"Yes," I said, "if you mean that half-caste whom some one has thrust upon me, she is in there. So if she is to come with us, perhaps you will get her out."

Thus adjured the melancholy-looking captain, who was named Indudu, perhaps because he or his father had belonged to the Dudu regiment, crawled into the hut, whence presently emerged sounds not unlike those which once I heard when a *ringhals* cobra followed a hare that I had wounded into a hole, a muffled sound of struggling and terror. These ended in the sudden and violent appearance of Kaatje's fat and disheveled form, followed by that of the snakelike Indudu.

Seeing me standing there before a bevy of armed Zulus, she promptly fell upon my neck with a cry for help, for the silly woman thought she was going to be liked by them. Gripping me as a creeper grips a tree, she proceeded to faint, dragging me to my knees beneath the weight of eleven stone of solid flesh.

"Ah," said one of the Zulus not unkindly, "she is much afraid for her husband whom she loves."

Well, I disentangled myself somehow, and seizing what I took to be a gourd of water in that dim light, poured it over her head, only to discover too late that it was not water but clotted milk. However the result was the same, for presently she sat up, made a dreadful-looking object by this liberal application of curds and whey, whereon I explained matters to her to the best of my power.

The end of it was that after Indudu and Goza had wiped her down with tufts of thatch dragged from the hut and I had collected her gear with the rest of my own, we set her on the horse straddlewise and started, the objects of much interest among such Zulus as were already abroad.

AT THE gate of the town there was a delay which made me nervous, since in such a case as mine delay might always mean a death-warrant. I knew that it was quite possible Cetewayo had changed, or been persuaded to change his mind and issue a command that I should be killed as one who had seen and knew too much. Indeed, this fear was my constant companion during all the long journey to the Drift of the Tugela, causing me to look askance at every man we met or who overtook us, lest he should prove to be a messenger of doom.

Nor were these doubts groundless, for as I learned in the after days, the Prime Minister, Umnyamana, and others, had urged Cetewayo strongly to kill me, and what we were waiting for at the gate were his final orders on the subject. However, in this matter, as in more that I could mention, the king played the part of a man of honor, and although he seemed to hesitate for reasons of policy, never had any intention of allowing me to be harmed. On the contrary, the command brought was that any one who harmed Macumazahn, the king's guest and messenger, should die with all his house.

Whilst we tarried, a number of women gathered round us whose conversation I could not help overhearing. One of them said to another:

"Look at the white man, Watcher-by-Night, who can knock a fly off an ox's horn with a bullet from further away than we could see it. He it was who loved and was loved by the witch Mameena, whose beauty is still famous in the land. They say she killed herself for his sake, because she declared that she would never live to grow old and ugly, so that he turned away from her. My mother told me all about it only last night."

Then you have a liar for a mother, thought I to myself, for to contradict such a one openly would have been undignified.

"Is it so?" asked one of her friends, deeply interested. "Then the lady Mameena must have had a strange taste in men, for this one is an ugly little fellow with hair like the gray ash of stubble and a wrinkled face of the color of a flayed skin that has lain unstretched in the sun. However, I have been told that witches always love those who look unnatural."

"Yes," said number one, "but you see now that he is old he has to be satisfied with a different sort of wife. She is not beautiful, is she, although she has dipped her head in milk to make herself look white."

And so it went on till at length a runner arrived and whispered something to Indudu who saluted, showing me that it was a royal message, and ordered us to move. Of this I was glad, for had I stopped there much longer I think I should have personally assaulted those gossiping idiots.

Of our journey through Zululand there is nothing particular to say. We saw but few people, since most of the men had been called up to the army, and many of the kraals seemed to be deserted by the women and children who perhaps were hidden away with the cattle.

Once, however, we met an *impi* about five thousand strong, that seemed to cover the hillside like a herd of game. It consisted of the Nodwengu and the Nokenke regiments, both of which afterward fought at Isandhlwana.

Some of their captains with a small guard came to see who we were, fine, fierce-looking men. They stared at me curiously, and with one of them, whom I knew, I had a little talk. He said that I was the last white man in Zululand and that I was lucky to be alive, for soon these—he pointed to the hordes of warriors who were streaming past—would eat up the English to "the last bone."

I answered that this remained to be seen, as the English were also great eaters, whereat he laughed, replying that it was true that the white men had already taken the first

bite—a very little one—from which I gathered that some small engagement had happened.

"Well, farewell, Macumazahn," he said, as he turned to go, "I hope that we shall meet in the battle, for I want to see if you can run as well as you can shoot."

This roused my temper and I answered him—

"I hope for your sake that we shall not meet, for if we do I promise that before I run I will show you what you never saw before, the gateway of the world of spirits."

I mention this conversation because by some strange chance it happened at Isandhlwana that I killed this man, who was named Simpofu.

During all those days of trudging through hot suns and thunderstorms, for I had to give up the mare to Kaatje who was too fat to walk, or said she was, I was literally haunted by thoughts of my murdered friends. Heaven knows how bitterly I reproached myself for having brought them into Zululand. It seemed so terribly sad that these young people who loved each other and had so bright a future before them, should have escaped from a tragic past merely to be overwhelmed by such a fate.

Again and again I questioned that lump Kaatje as to the details of their end and of all that went before and followed after the murder. But it was quite useless; indeed, as time went on she seemed to become more nebulous on the point as though a picture were fading from her mind. But as to one thing she was always quite clear, that she had seen them dead and had seen their new-made grave. This she swore "by God in heaven," completing the oath an with an outburst of tears in a way that would have carried conviction to any jury, as it did to me.

And after all, what was more likely in the circumstances? Zikali had killed them, or caused them to be killed, or possibly they were killed in spite of him in obedience to the express, or general, order of the king, if the deed was not done by the Basutos.

And yet an idea occurred to me. How about the woman on the rock that the Zulus thought was their Princess of the Heavens? Obviously this must be nonsense, since no such deity existed; therefore the person must either have been a white woman or one painted up to resemble a white woman; seen from a distance in moonlight it was impossible to say which. Now, if it were a white woman, she might, from her shape and height and the color of her hair, be Heda herself. Yet it seemed incredible that Heda, whom Kaatje had seen dead some days before, could be masquerading in such a part and make no sign of recognition to me, even when I covered her with my pistol, whereas that Nombé would play it was likely enough.

Only then Nombé must be something of a quick-change artist since but a little while before she was beyond doubt personating the dead Mameena. If it were not so I must have been suffering from illusions, for certainly I seemed to see some one who looked like Mameena, and only Zikali, and through him Nombé, had sufficient knowledge to enable her to fill that rôle with such success.

Perhaps the whole business was an illusion, though if so Zikali's powers must be great indeed. But then how about the assegai that Nomkubulwana, or rather her effigy, had seemed to hold and throw, whereof the blade was at present in my saddlebag? That at any rate was tangible and real, though of course there was nothing to prove that it had really been Chaka's famous weapon.

Another thing that tormented me was my failure to see Zikali. I felt as if I had committed a crime in leaving Zululand without doing this and hearing from his own lips —well, whatever he chose to tell me.

I forget if I said that while we were waiting at the gate where those silly women talked so much nonsense about Mameena and Kaatje, that I made another effort through Goza to get into touch with the wizard, but quite without avail. Goza only answered what he said before, that if I wished to die at once I had better take ten steps toward the Valley of Bones, whence, he added parenthetically, the Opener of Roads had already departed on his homeward journey.

This might or might not be true; at any rate I could find no possible way of coming face to face with him, or even of getting a message to his ear. No, I was not to blame; I had done all I could, and yet in my heart I felt guilty. But then, as cynics would say, failure is guilt.

At length we came to the ford of the Tugela, and as fortunately the water was

just low enough, bade farewell to our escort before crossing to the Natal side.

My parting with Goza was quite touching, for we felt that it partook of the nature of a deathbed adieu, which indeed it did. I told him and the others that I hoped their ends would be easy, and that whether they met them by bullets or by bayonet thrusts, the wounds would prove quickly mortal so that they might not linger in discomfort or pain. Recognizing my kind thought for their true welfare they thanked me for it, though with no enthusiasm.

Indudu, however, filled with the spirit of repartee, or rather of *tu quoque*, said in his melancholy fashion that if he and I came face to face in war, he would be sure to remember my words and to cut me up in the best style, since he could not bear to think of me languishing on a bed of sickness without my wife Kaatje to nurse me (they knew I was touchy about Kaatje). Then we shook hands and parted. Kaatje, hung round with paraphernalia like the White Knight in "Alice through the Looking-glass," clinging to a cooking-pot and weeping tears of terror, faced the foaming flood upon the mare, while I grasped its tail.

When we were as I judged out of assegai shot, I turned, with the water up to my armpits, and shouted some valedictory words.

"Tell your king," I said, "that he is the greatest fool in the world to fight the English, since it will bring his country to destruction and himself to disgrace and death, as at last, in the words of your proverb, 'the swimmer goes down with the stream.' "

Here, as it happened, I slipped off the stone on which I was standing and nearly went down with the stream myself.

Emerging with my mouth full of muddy water I waited till they had done laughing and continued—

"Tell that old rogue, Zikali, that I know he has murdered my friends and that when we meet again he and all who were in the plot shall pay for it with their lives."

Now an irritated Zulu flung an assegai, and, as the range proved to be shorter than I thought, for it went through Kaatje's dress, causing her to scream with alarm, I ceased from eloquence, and we struggled on to the further bank, where at length we were safe.

Thus ended this unlucky trip of mine to Zululand.

CHAPTER XVIII

ISANDHLWANA

WE HAD crossed the Tugela by what is known as the Middle Drift. A mile or so on the further side of it I was challenged by a young fellow in charge of some mounted natives, and found that I had stumbled into what was known as No. 2 Column, which consisted of a rocket battery, three battalions of the Native Contingent and some troops of mounted natives, all under the command of Colonel Durnford, R. E.

After explanations I was taken to this officer's headquarter tent. He was a tall, nervous-looking man with a fair, handsome face and long side-whiskers. One of his arms was supported by a sling. I think it had been injured in some Kaffir fighting.

When I was introduced to him he was very busy, having, I understood from some one on his staff, just received orders to "operate against Matshana." Learning that I had come from Zululand and was acquainted with the Zulus, he at once began to cross-examine me about Matshana, a chief of whom he seemed to know very little indeed. I told him what I could, which was not much, and before I could give him any information of real importance, was shown out and most hospitably entertained at luncheon, a meal of which I partook with gratitude in some garments that I had borrowed from one of the officers, while my own were set in the sun to dry. Well can I remember how much I enjoyed the first whisky and soda that I had tasted since I left "the Temple," and the good English food by which it was accompanied.

Presently I remembered Kaatje, whom I had left outside with some native women, and went to see what had happened to her. I found her finishing a hearty meal and engaged in conversation with a young gentleman who was writing in a notebook. Afterward I discovered that he was a newspaper correspondent. What she told him and what he imagined, I do not know, but I may as well state the results at once.

Within a few days there appeared in one of the Natal papers and, for aught I know, all over the earth, an announcement that Mr. Allan Quatermain, a well-known hunter in Zululand, had, after many adventures, escaped from that country together with

his favorite native wife, the only survivor of his extensive domestic establishment. Then followed some wild details as to the murder of my other wives by a Zulu wizard called "Road Mender, or Sick Ass" (i. e., Opener of Roads or Zikali) and so on.

I was furious and interviewed the editor, a mild and apologetic little man, who assured me that the dispatch was printed exactly as it had been received, as if that bettered the case. After this I commenced an action for libel, but as I was absent through circumstances over which I had no control when it came on for trial, the case was dismissed. I suppose the truth was that they mixed me up with John Dunn, a white man in Zululand who had a large native establishment, but however this may be, it was a long while before I heard the last of that "favorite native wife."

Later in the day I—and Kaatje, who stuck to me like a burr—departed from the camp.

The rest of our journey was uneventful, except for more misunderstandings about Kaatje, one of which, wherein a clergyman was concerned, was too painful to relate. At last we reached Maritzburg, where I deposited Kaatje in a boarding-house kept by another half-caste, and with a sigh of relief betook myself to the Plough Hotel, which was a long way off.

Subsequently she obtained a place as a cook at Howick, and for a while I saw her no more.

At Maritzburg, as in duty bound, I called upon various persons in authority and delivered Cetewayo's message, leaving out all Zikali's witchcraft which would have sounded absurd. It did not produce much impression as, hostilities having already occurred, it was superfluous. Also no one was inclined to pay attention to the words of one who was neither an official nor a military officer, but a mere hunter supposed to have brought a native wife out of Zululand.

I did, however, report the murder of Anscombe and Heda, though in such times this caused no excitement, especially as they were not known to the officials concerned with such matters. Indeed, the occurrence never so much as got into the papers, any more than did the deaths of Todd and Marnham on the borders of Sekukuni's country. When people are expecting to be massacred themselves, they do not trouble about the past killing of others far away.

Lastly, I posted Marnham's will to the Pretoria bank, advising them that they had better keep it safely until some claim arose, and deposited Heda's jewels and valuables in another branch of the same bank in Maritzburg with a sealed statement as to how they came into my possession.

These things done, I found it necessary to turn myself to the eternal problem of earning my living. I am a very rich man now as I write these reminiscences here in Yorkshire—King Solomon's Mines made me that—but up to the time of my journey to Kukuana Land with my friends, Curtis and Good, although plenty of money passed through my hands on one occasion and another, little of it ever seemed to stick. In this way or that it was lost or melted; also I was not born one to make the best of his opportunities in the way of acquiring wealth.

Perhaps this was good for me, since if I had gained the cash early I should not have met with the experiences, and during our few transitory years experience is of more real value than cash. It may prepare us for other things beyond, whereas the mere possession of a bank balance can prepare us for nothing in a land where gold ceases to be an object of worship as it is here, a fact which shows that the real essence of Christianity has not yet permeated human morals.

Now I owned certain wagons and oxen, and just then the demand for these was keen. So I hired them out to the military authorities for service in the war, and incidentally myself with them.

I drove what I considered a splendid bargain with an officer who wrote as many letters after his name as a Governor-General, but was really something quite humble. At least I thought it splendid until outside his tent I met a certain transport rider of my acquaintance whom I had always looked upon as a perfect fool, who told me that not half an hour before he had got twenty per cent. more for unsalted oxen and very rickety wagons.

However, it did not matter much in the end as the whole outfit was lost at Isandhlwana, and, owing to the lack of some formality which I had overlooked, I never recovered more than a tithe of their value. I think it was that I neglected to claim within a certain specified time.

At last my wagons were laden with ammunition and other Government goods and I trekked over awful roads to Helpmakaar, a place on the Highlands not far from Rorke's Drift where No. 3 Column was stationed. Here we were delayed a while, I and my wagons having moved to a ford of the Buffalo, together with many others.

It was during this time that I ventured to make very urgent representations to certain highly placed officers, I will not mention which, as to the necessity of laagering, that is, forming fortified camps, as soon as Zululand was entered, since from my intimate knowledge of its people I was sure that they would attack in force. These warnings of mine were received with the most perfect politeness and offers of gin to drink, which all transport riders were supposed to love, but in effect were treated with the contempt that they were held to deserve.

The subject is painful and one on which I will not dwell. Why should I complain when I know that cautions from notable persons such as Sir Melmoth Osborn, and J. J. Uys, a member of one of the old Dutch fighting families, met with a like fate?

By the way, it was while I was waiting on the banks of the river that I came across an old friend of mine, a Zulu named Magepa, with whom I had fought at the battle of the Tugela, who, a few days later, performed an extraordinary feat in saving his grandchild by running, whereof I have preserved a note somewhere or other.

Ultimately on January 11 we got our marching orders and crossed the river by the drift, the general scheme of the campaign being that the various columns were to converge upon Ulundi. The roads, if so they can be called, were in such a fearful state that it took us ten days to cover as many miles.

At length we trekked over a stony neck about five hundred yards in width. To the right of us was a low hill and to our left, its sheer brown cliffs of rock rising like the walls of some cyclopean fortress, the strange, abrupt mount of Isandhlwana, which reminded me of a huge lion crouching above the hill-encircled plain beyond.

At the foot of this isolated hill, whereof the aspect somehow filled me with alarm, we camped on the night of January 21, taking no precautions against attack by way of laagering the wagons. Indeed the last thing that seemed to occur to those in command was that there would be serious fighting; men marched forward to their deaths as if they were going on a shooting-party, or to a picnic. I even saw cricketing bats and wickets occupying some of the scanty space upon the wagons.

Now I am not going to set out all the military details that preceded the massacre of Isandhlwana, for these are written in history. It is enough to say that on the night of January 21, Major Dartnell, who was in command of the Natal Mounted Police and had been sent out to reconnoiter the country beyond Isandhlwana, reported a strong force of Zulus in front of us. Thereon Lord Chelmsford, the General-in-Chief, moved out from the camp at dawn to his support, taking with him six companions of the 24th regiment, together with four guns and the mounted infantry.

There were left in the camp two guns and about eight hundred white and nine hundred native troops, also some transport riders such as myself and a number of miscellaneous camp-followers. I saw him go from between the curtains of one of my wagons where I had made my bed on the top of a pile of baggage. Indeed I had already dressed myself at the time, for that night I slept very ill because I knew our danger, and my heart was heavy with fear.

About ten o'clock in the morning Colonel Durnford, whom I have mentioned already, rode up with five hundred Natal Zulus, about half of whom were mounted, and two rocket tubes which, of course, were worked by white men. This was after a patrol had reported that they had come into touch with some Zulus on the left front, who retired before them. As a matter of fact these Zulus were foraging in the mealie fields, since owing to the drought food was very scarce in Zululand that year and the regiments were hungry.

I happened to see the meeting between Colonel Pulleine, a short, stout man who was then in command of the camp, and Colonel Durnford who, as his senior officer, took it over from him, and heard Colonel Pulleine say that his orders were "to defend the camp," but what else passed between them I do not know.

Presently Colonel Durnford saw and recognized me.

"Do you think the Zulus will attack us, Mr. Quatermain?" he said.

"I don't think so, sir," I answered, "as it is the day of the new moon which they hold unlucky. But tomorrow it may be different."

Then he gave certain orders, dispatching Captain George Shepstone with a body of mounted natives along the ridge to the left, where presently they came in contact with the Zulus about three miles away, and making other dispositions. A little later he moved out to the front with a strong escort, followed by the rocket battery, which ultimately advanced to a little conical hill round which it passed, never to return again.

Just before he started Colonel Durnford, seeing me still standing there, asked me if I would like to accompany him, adding that as I knew the Zulus so well I might be useful. I answered, Certainly, and called to my head driver, a man named Jan, to bring me my mare, the same that I had ridden out of Zululand, while I slipped into the wagon and, in addition to the beltful that I wore, filled all my available pockets with cartridges for my double-barreled Express rifle.

As I mounted I gave Jan certain directions about the wagon and oxen, to which he listened, and then to my astonishment held out his hand to me, saying:

"Good-by, Baas. You have been a kind master to me and I thank you."

"Why do you say that?" I asked

"Because, Baas, all the Kaffirs declare that the great Zulu *impi* will be on to us in an hour or two and eat up every man. I can't tell how they know it, but so they swear."

"Nonsense," I answered, "it is the day of new moon when the Zulus don't fight. Still if anything of the sort should happen, you and the other boys had better slip away to Natal, since the Government must pay for the wagons and oxen."

This I said half joking, but it was a lucky jest, for Jan and the rest of my servants, since they interpreted it in earnest and with the exception of one of them who went back to get a gun, got off before the Zulu horde closed round the camp, and crossed the river in safety.

Next moment I was cantering away after Colonel Durnford, whom I caught up about a quarter of a mile from the camp.

NOW of course I did not see all of the terrible battle that followed and can only tell of that part of it in which I had a share. Colonel Durnford rode out about three and a half miles to the left front, I really don't quite know why, for already we were hearing firing on the top of the Nqutu Hills almost behind us, where Captain Shepstone was engaging the Zulus, or so I believe.

Suddenly we met a trooper of the Natal Carabineers whose name was Whitelaw, who had been out scouting. He reported that an enormous *impi* was just ahead of us seated in an *umkumbi*, or semicircle, as is the fashion of the Zulus before they charge. At least some of them, he said, were so seated, but others were already advancing.

Presently these appeared over the crest of the hill, ten thousand of them I should say, and among them I recognized the shields of the Nodwengu, the Dududu, the Nokenke and the Ingobamakosi regiments. Now there was nothing to be done except retreat, for the *impi* was attacking in earnest.

The General Untshingwayo, together with Undabuko, Cetewayo's brother, and the chief Usibebu who commanded the scouts, had agreed not to fight this day for the reason I have given, because it was that of the new moon, but circumstances had forced their hand and the regiments could no longer be restrained. So to the number of twenty thousand or more, say one-third of the total Zulu army, they hurled themselves upon the little English force that, owing to lack of generalship, was scattered here and there over a wide front and had no fortified base upon which to withdraw.

We fell back to a donga which we held for a little while, and then, as we saw that there we should presently be overwhelmed, withdrew gradually for another two miles or so, keeping off the Zulus by our fire. In so doing we came upon the remains of the rocket battery near the foot of the conical hill I have mentioned, which had been destroyed by some regiment that passed behind us in its rush on the camp. There lay all the soldiers dead, assegaied through and through, and I noticed that one young fellow, who had been shot through the head, still held a rocket in his hands.

Now somewhat behind and perhaps half a mile to the right of this hill a long, shallow donga runs across the Isandhlwana plain. This we gained, and, being there reinforced by about fifty of the Natal Carabineers under Captain Bradstreet, defended it for a long while, holding off the Zulus by our

terrible fire, which cut down scores of them every time they attempted to advance.

At this spot I alone killed from twelve to fifteen of them, for if the big bullet from my Express rifle struck a man, he did not live. Messengers were sent back to the camp for more ammunition, but none arrived, Heaven knows why. My own belief is that the reserve cartridges were packed away in boxes and could not be got at. At last our supply began to run short, so there was nothing to be done except retreat upon the camp which was perhaps half a mile behind us.

Taking advantage of a pause in the Zulu advance which had lain down while waiting for reserves, Colonel Durnford ordered a retirement that was carried out very well. Up to that time we had lost only quite a few men, for the Zulu fire was wild and high and they had not been able to get at us with the assegai.

As we rode toward the mount I observed that firing was going on in all directions, especially on the neck that connected it with the Nqutu range where Captain Shepstone and his mounted Basutos were wiped out while trying to hold back the Zulu right wing. The guns, too, were firing heavily and doing great execution.

After this all grew confused. Colonel Durnford gave orders to certain officers who came up to him, Captain Essex was one and Lieutenant Cochrane another. Then his force made for their wagons to get more ammunition.

I kept near to the Colonel and a while later found myself with him and a large, mixed body of men a little to the right of the neck which we had crossed in our advance from the river. Not long afterward there was a cry of "The Zulus are getting round us!" and looking to the left I saw them pouring in hundreds across the ridge that joins Isandhlwana Mountain to the Nqutu range. Also they were advancing straight on to the camp.

Then the rout began. Already the native auxiliaries were slipping away, and now the others followed.

Of course this battle was but a small affair, yet I think that few have been more terrible, at any rate in modern times. The aspect of those plumed and shielded Zulus as they charged, shouting their war-cries and waving their spears, was awesome. They were mown down in hundreds by the Martini fire, but still they came on, and I knew that the game was up.

A maddened horde of fugitives, mostly natives, began to flow past us over the neck, making for what was afterward called Fugitives' Drift, nine miles away, and with them went white soldiers, some mounted, some on foot. Mingled with all these people, following them, on either side of them, rushed Zulus, stabbing as they ran. Other groups of soldiers formed themselves into rough squares, on which the savage warriors broke like water on a rock.

By degrees ammunition ran out; only the bayonet remained. Still the Zulus could not break those squares. So they took another counsel. Withdrawing a few paces beyond the reach of the bayonets, they overwhelmed the soldiers by throwing assegais, then rushed in and finished them.

This was what happened to us, among whom were men of the 24th, Natal Carabineers and Mounted Police. Some had dismounted, but I sat on my horse, which stood quite still, I think from fright, and fired away so long as I had any ammunition. With my very last cartridge I killed the Captain Indudu who had been in charge of the escort that conducted me to the Tugela. He had caught sight of me and called out—

"Now, Macumazahn, I will cut you up nicely as I promised."

He got no further in his speech, for at that moment I sent an Express bullet through him and his tall, melancholy figure doubled up and collapsed.

All this while Colonel Durnford had been behaving as a British officer should do. Scorning to attempt flight, whenever I looked round I caught sight of his tall form, easy to recognize by the long fair mustaches and his arm in a sling, moving to and fro encouraging us to stand firm and die like men. Then suddenly I saw a Kaffir, who carried a big old smooth-bore gun, aim at him from a distance of about twenty yards, and fire. He went down, as I believe dead, and that was the end of a very gallant officer and gentleman whose military memory has in my opinion been most unjustly attacked. The real blame for that disaster does not rest upon the shoulders of either Colonel Durnford or Colonel Pulleine.

After this things grew very awful. Some fled, but the most stood and died where they were. Oddly enough during all this

time I was never touched. Men fell to my right and left and in front of me; bullets and assegais whizzed past me, yet I remained quite unhurt. It was as if some power protected me, which no doubt it did.

At length when nearly all had fallen and I had nothing left to defend myself with except my revolver, I made up my mind that it was time to go. My first impulse was to ride for the river nine miles away.

Looking behind me I saw that the rough road was full of Zulus hunting down those who tried to escape. Still I thought I would try it, when suddenly there flashed across my brain the saying of whoever it was that personated Mameena in the Valley of Bones, to the effect that in the great rout of the battle I was not to join the flying but to set my face toward Ulundi, and that if I did so I would be protected and no harm should come to me. I knew that all this prophecy was but a vain thing fondly imagined, although it was true that the battle and the rout had come. And yet I acted on it—why, Heaven alone knows.

Setting the spurs to my horse I galloped off past Isandhlwana Mount, on the southern slopes of which a body of the 24th were still fighting their last fight, and headed for the Nqutu Range.

The plain was full of Zulus, reserves running up; also to the right of me the Ulundi and Gikazi divisions were streaming forward. These, or some of them, formed the left horn of the *impi*, but owing to the unprepared nature of the Zulu battle, for it must always be remembered that they did not mean to fight that day, their advance had been delayed until it was too late for them entirely to enclose the camp. Thus the road, if it can so be called, to Fugitives' Drift was left open for a while, and by it some effected their escape. It was this horn, or part of it, that afterward moved on and attacked Rorke's Drift, with disastrous results to itself.

For some hundreds of yards I rode on thus recklessly, because recklessness seemed my only chance. Thrice I met bodies of Zulus, but on each occasion they scattered before me, calling out words that I could not catch. It was as if they were frightened of something they saw about me.

Perhaps they thought that I was mad to ride thus among them. Indeed I must have looked mad, or perhaps there was something else. At any rate I believed that I was going to win right through them when an accident happened.

A bullet struck my mare somewhere in the back. I don't know where it came from, but, as I saw no Zulu shoot, I think it must have been one fired by a soldier who was still fighting on the slopes of the mount. The effect of it was to make the poor beast quite ungovernable. Round she wheeled and galloped at headlong speed back toward the peak, leaping over dead and dying and breaking through the living as she went.

In two minutes we were rushing up its northern slopes, which seemed to be quite untenanted, for the fighting was going on on the other side, toward the sheer brown cliff which rose above it. Suddenly at the foot of this cliff she stopped, shivered and sank down dead, probably from internal bleeding.

I looked about me desperately. To attempt the plain on foot was impossible. What then was I to do? Glancing at the cliff I saw that there was a gully in it worn by thousands of years of rainfall, in which grew scanty bushes.

Into this I ran, and, finding it practicable though difficult, began to climb upward, quite unnoticed by the Zulus who were all employed upon the further side.

The end of it was that I reached the very crest of the mount, a patch of bare, brown rock, except at one spot on its southern front where there was a little hollow in which at this rainy season of the year herbage and ferns grew in the accumulated soil, also a few stunted, aloe-like plants.

Into this patch I crept, having slaked my thirst from a little pool of rain-water that lay in a cup-like depression of the rock, which tasted more delicious than any nectar and seemed to give me new life. Then, covering myself as well as I could with grasses and dried leaves from the aloe plants, I lay still.

Now I was right on the brink of the cliff and had the best view of the Isandhlwana plain and the surrounding country that can be imagined. From my lofty aerie some hundreds of feet in the air, I could see everything that happened beneath.

Thus I witnessed the destruction of the last of the soldiers on the slopes below. They made a gallant end, so gallant that I was proud to be of the same blood with them. One fine young fellow escaped up

the peak and reached a plateau about fifty feet beneath me. He was followed by a number of Zulus, but took refuge in a little cave whence he shot three or four of them; then his cartridges were exhausted and I heard the savages speaking in praise of him —dead. I think he was the last to die on the field of Isandhlwana.

The looting of the camp began; it was a terrible scene. The oxen and those of the horses that could be caught were driven away, except certain of the former which were harnessed to the guns and some of the wagons and, as I afterward learned, taken to Ulundi in proof of victory.

The bodies of the slain were stripped and Kaffirs appeared wearing the red coats of the soldiers and carrying their rifles. The stores were broken into and all the spirits drunk. Even the medical drugs were drunk by these ignorant men, with the result that I saw some of them reeling about in agony and others fall down and go to sleep.

An hour or two later an officer who came from the direction in which the General had marched, cantered right into the camp where the tents were still standing and even the flag was flying. I longed to be able to warn him, but could not. He rode up to the headquarters marquee, whence suddenly issued a Zulu waving a great spear. I saw the officer pull up his horse, remain for a moment as if indecisive, then turn and gallop madly away, quite unharmed, though one or two assegais were thrown and many shots fired at him. After this, considerable movements of the Zulus went on, of which the net result was, that they evacuated the place.

Now I hoped that I might escape, but it was not to be, since on every side numbers of them crept up Isandhlwana Mountain and hid behind rocks or among the tall grasses, evidently for purposes of observation. Moreover some captains arrived on the little plateau where was the cave in which the soldier had been killed, and camped there. At least at sundown they unrolled their mats and ate, though they lighted no fire.

The darkness fell and in it escape for me from that guarded place was impossible, since I could not see where to set my feet and one false step on the steep rock would have meant my death. From the direction of Rorke's Drift I could hear continuous firing; evidently some great fight was going on there, I wondered vaguely—with what result.

A little later also I heard the distant tramp of horses and the roll of gun wheels. The captains below heard it too and said one to another that it was the English soldiers returning, who had marched out of the camp at dawn. They debated one with another whether it would be possible to collect a force to fall upon them, but abandoned the idea because the regiments who has fought that day were now at a distance and too tired, and the others had rushed forward without orders to attack the white men on and beyond the river.

So they lay still and listened, and I too lay still and listened, for on that cloudy, moonless night I could see nothing. I heard smothered words of command. I heard the force halt because it could not travel further in the gloom. There they lay down, the living among the dead, wondering doubtless if they themselves would not soon be dead, as of course must have happened had the Zulu generalship been better, for if even five thousand men had been available to attack at dawn not one of them could have escaped. But Providence ordained it otherwise. Some were taken and the others left.

About an hour before daylight I heard them stirring again, and when its first gleams came all of them had vanished over the nek of slaughter, with what thoughts in their hearts, I wondered, and to what fate.

The captains on the plateau beneath had gone also, and so had the circle of guards upon the slopes of the mount, for I saw these depart through the gray mist. As the light gathered, however, I observed bodies of men collecting on the nek, or rather on both neks, which made it impossible for me to do what I had hoped—run to overtake the English troops. From these I was utterly cut off. Nor could I remain longer without food on my point of rock, especially as I was sure that soon some Zulus would climb there to use it as an outlook post.

So, while I was still more or less hidden by the mist and morning shadows, I climbed down it by the same road that I had climbed up, and thus reached the plain. Not a living man, white or black, was to be seen, only the dead, only the dead. I was the last Englishman who drew breath to stand upon the plain of Isandhlwana for weeks or months to come.

Of all my experiences this was, I think, the strangest, after that night of hell, to find myself alone upon this field of death, staring everywhere at the distorted faces which on the previous morn I had seen so full of life. Yet my physical needs asserted themselves. I was very hungry, who for twenty-four hours had eaten nothing, faint with hunger indeed.

I passed a provision wagon that had been looted by the Zulus. Tins of bully beef lay about, also among a wreck of broken glass some bottles of Bass' beer which had escaped their notice. I found an assegai, cleaned it in the ground, which it needed, and, opening one of the tins, lay down in a tuft of grass by a dead man, or rather between him and some Zulus whom he had killed, and devoured its contents. Also I knocked the tops off a couple of the beer bottles and drank my fill.

While I was doing this a large, rough dog with a silver-mounted collar on its neck, I think of the sort that is called an Airedale terrier, came up to me whining. At first I thought it was an hyena, but discovering my mistake, threw it some bits of meat which it ate greedily. Doubtless it had belonged to some dead officer, though there was no name on the collar. The poor beast, which I named "Lost," at once attached itself to me, and here I may say that I kept it till its death, which occurred of jaundice at Durban not long before I started on my journey to King Solomon's Mines. No man ever had a more faithful friend and companion.

When I had eaten and drunk I looked about me, wondering what I should do. Fifty yards away I saw a stout Basuto pony still saddled and bridled, although the saddle was twisted out of its proper position, which was cropping the grass as well as it could with the bit in its mouth. Advancing gently I caught it without trouble and led it back to the plundered wagon. Evidently from the marks it had belonged to Captain Shepstone's force of mounted natives.

Here I filled the large saddlebags made of buckskin with tins of beef, a couple more bottles of beer and a packet of matches which I was fortunate enough to find. Also I took the Martini rifle from the dead soldier, together with a score or so of cartridges that remained in his belt, for apparently he must have been killed rather early in the fight.

Thus equipped I mounted the pony and once more bethought me of escaping to Natal. A look toward the nek cured me of that idea, for coming over it I saw the plumed heads of a whole horde of warriors. Doubtless these were returning from the unsuccessful attack on Rorke's Drift, though of that I knew nothing at the time. So whistling to the dog I bore to the left for the Nqutu Hills, riding as fast as the rough ground would allow, and in half an hour was out of sight of that accursed plain.

One more thing I did. On its confines I came across a group of dead Zulus who appeared to have been killed by a shell. Dismounting I took the head-dress of one of them and put it on, for I forgot to say I had lost my hat. It was made of a band of otterskin from which rose large tufts of the black feathers of the finch which the natives call *sakabula*. Also I tied his kilt of white oxtails about my middle, precautions to which I have little doubt I owe my life, since from a distance they made me look like a Kaffir mounted on a captured pony.

Then I started on again, whither I knew not.

CHAPTER XIX

ALLAN AWAKES

NOW I have no intention of setting down all the details of that dreadful journey through Zululand, even if I could recall them, which, for a reason to be stated, I can not do. I remember that at first I thought of proceeding to Ulundi with some wild idea of throwing myself on the mercy of Cetewayo under pretense that I brought him a message from Natal.

Within a couple of hours, however, from the top of a hill I saw ahead of me an *impi* and with them captured wagons which was evidently heading for the king's kraal. So as I knew what kind of a greeting these would give me, I bore away in another direction with the hope of reaching the border by a circuitous route.

In this too I had no luck, since presently I caught sight of outposts stationed upon rocks which doubtless belonged to another *impi* or regiment. Indeed one soldier, thinking from my dress that I also was a Zulu, called to me for news from about half a mile away, in that peculiar carrying voice which Kaffirs can command. I

shouted back something about victory and that the white men were wiped out, then put an end to the conversation by vanishing into a patch of dense bush.

It is a fact that after this I have only the dimmest recollection of what happened. I remember off-saddling at night on several occasions. I remember being very hungry because all the food was eaten and the dog, Lost, catching a bush buck-fawn, some of which I partially cooked on a fire of dead wood, and devoured. Next I remember—I suppose this was a day or two later—riding at night in a thunderstorm and a particularly brilliant flash of lightning which revealed scenery that seemed to be familiar to me, after which came a shock and total unconsciousness.

At length my mind returned to me again. It was reborn very slowly and with horrible convulsions out of the womb of death and terror. I saw blood flowing round me in rivers, I heard the cries of triumph and of agony. I saw myself standing, the sole survivor, on a gray field of death, and the utter loneliness of it ate into my soul, so that with all its strength it prayed that it might be numbered in this harvest. But oh! it was so strong, that soul which could not, would not die or fly away. So strong, that I think then for the first time I understood its immortality and that it could *never* die.

This everlasting thing still clung for a while to the body of its humiliation, the mass of clay and nerves and appetites which it was doomed to animate, and yet knew its own separateness and eternal individuality. Striving to be free of earth, it yet seemed to walk the earth, a spirit and a shadow, aware of the hatefulness of that to which it was chained, as we might imagine some lovely butterfly to be that is fated by nature to suck its strength from carrion, and remains unable to soar away into the clean air of heaven.

Something touched my hand and I reflected dreamily that if I had been still alive, for in a way I believed that I was dead, I should have thought it was a dog's tongue. With a great effort I lifted my arm, opened my eyes and looked at the hand against the light, for there was light, to see it was so thin that this light shone through between the bones. Then I let it fall again, and behold! it rested on, the head of a dog which went on licking it.

A dog! What dog? Now I remembered; one that I had found on the field of Isandhlwana. Then I must be still alive. The thought made me cry, for I could feel the tears running down my cheeks, not with joy but with sorrow.

I did not wish to go on living. Life was too full of struggle and of bloodshed and bereavement and fear and all horrible things. I was prepared to exchange my part in it just for rest, for the blessing of deep, unending sleep in which no more dreams could come, no more cups of joy could be held to thirsting lips, only to be snatched away.

I heard something shuffling toward me at which the dog growled, then seemed to slink away as if it were afraid. I opened my eyes again, looked, and closed them once more in terror, for what I saw suggested that perhaps I was dead after all and had reached that hell which a certain class of earnest Christian promises to us as the reward of the failings that Nature and those who begat us have handed on to us as a birth doom. It was something unnatural, gray-headed, terrific—doubtless a devil come to torment me in the inquisition vaults of Hades. Yet I had known the like when I was alive. How had it been called? I remembered, "The-thing-that-never-should-have-been-born." Hark! It was speaking in that full deep voice which was unlike to any other.

"Greeting, Macumazahn," it said. "I see that you have come back from among the dead with whom you have been dwelling for a moon and more. It is not wise of you, Macumazahn, yet I am glad who have matched my skill against death and won, for now you will have much to tell me about his kingdom."

So it was Zikali—Zikali who had butchered my friends.

"Away from me, murderer!" I said faintly. "Let me die, or kill me as you did the others."

He laughed, but very softly, not in his usual terrific fashion, repeating the word, murderer, two or three times. Then with his great hand he lifted my head gently as a woman might, saying—

"Look before you, Macumazahn."

I looked and saw that I was in some kind of a cave. Outside the sun was setting and against its brightness I perceived two figures, a white man and a white woman who were walking hand in hand and gazing into each other's eyes. They were

Anscombe and Heda passing the mouth of the cave.

"Behold the murdered, Macumazahn, dealer of hard words."

"It is only a trick," I murmured. "Kaatje saw them dead and buried."

"Yes, yes, I forgot. The fat fool-woman saw them dead and buried. Well, sometimes the dead come to life again and for good purpose, as you should know, Macumazahn, who followed the counsel of a certain Mameena and wandered here instead of rushing on to the Zulu spears."

I tried to think the thing out and could not, so only asked:

"How did I come? What happened to me?"

"I think the sun smote you first who had no covering on your head and the lightning smote you afterward. Yet all the while that reason had left you, One led your horse, and after the heavens had tried to kill you and failed, perhaps because my magic was too strong for them, One sent that beast which you found here to lead us to where you lay. There you were discovered and brought hither. Now sleep lest you should go further than even I can fetch you back again."

He held his hands above my head, seeming to grow in stature till his white hair touched the roof of the cave, and in an instant I fancied that I was falling away, deep, deep into a gulf of nothingness.

There followed another period of dreaming, in which dreams I seemed to meet all sorts of people, dead and living, especially Lady Ragnall, a friend of mine with whom I had been concerned in a very strange adventure among the Kendah people, and with whom in days to come I was destined to be concerned, although of course I knew nothing of this, in a still stranger adventure of what I may call a spiritual order, which I may or may not try to reduce to writing. It seemed to me that I was constantly dining with her *tête-à-tête* and that she told me all sorts of queer things between the courses. Doubtless these illusions occurred when I was fed.

AT LENGTH I woke up again, feeling much stronger, and saw the dog, Lost, watching me with its great tender eyes—oh! they talk of the eyes of women, but are they ever as beautiful as those of a loving dog? It lay by my low bedstead, a rough affair fashioned of poles and strung with *rimpis* or strings of rawhide, and by it, stroking its head, sat the witch-doctoress, Nombé. I remember how pleasing she looked, a perfect type of the eternal feminine, with her graceful, rounded shape and her continual, mysterious smile which suggested so much more than any mortal woman has to give.

"Good day to you, Macumazahn," she said in her gentle voice, "you have gone through much since last we met on the night before Goza took you away to Ulundi."

Now, remembering all, I was filled with indignation against this little humbug.

"The last time we met, Nombé," I said, "was when you played the part of a woman who is dead in the Vale of Bones by the king's kraal."

She regarded me with a kindly commiseration, and answered, shaking her head:

"You have been very ill, Macumazahn, and your spirit still tricks you. I played the part of no woman in any valley by the king's kraal, nor were my eyes rejoiced with the sight of you there or elsewhere till they brought you to this place, so changed that I should scarcely have known you."

"You little liar," I said rudely.

"Do the white people always name those liars who tell them true things they can not understand?" she inquired with a sweet innocence.

Then, without waiting for an answer, she patted my hand as if I were a fretful child and gave me some soup in a gourd, saying:

"Drink it, it is good. The lady Heddana made it herself in the white man's fashion."

I drank the soup, which *was* very good, and, as I handed back the gourd, answered:

"Kaatje has told me that the lady Heddana is dead. Can the dead make soup?"

She considered the point while she threw some bits of meat out of the bottom of the gourd to the dog, Lost, then replied:

"I do not know, Macumazahn, or indeed whether the dead eat as we do. Next time my spirit visits me I will make inquiry and tell you the answer. But I do know that it is very strange that you, who always turn your back upon the truth, are so ready to accept falsehoods. Why should you believe that the lady Heddana is dead just because Kaatje told you so, when I who am still alive had sworn to you that I would

protect her with my life? Nay, speak no more now. Tomorrow if you are well enough you shall see and judge for yourself."

Then she drew up the kaross over me, again patted my hand in her motherly fashion and departed, smiling, after which I went to sleep again, so dreamlessly that I think there was some native soporific in that soup.

On the following day two of Zikali's servants who did the rougher work of my sick-room, if I may so call it, arrived and said that they were going to carry me out of the cave for a while, if that were my will. I who longed to breathe the fresh air again, said that it was very much my will, whereon they grasped the rough bedstead that I have described by either end, and very carefully bore me down the cave and through its narrow entrance, where they set the bedstead in the shadow of the overhanging rock without.

When I had recovered a little, for even that short journey tired me, I looked about me and perceived that as I had expected, I was in the Black Kloof, for there in front of me were the very huts which we had occupied on our arrival from Swaziland.

I lay a while drawing in the sweet air which to me was like a draft of nectar, and wondering whether I were not still in a dream. For instance, I wondered if I had truly seen the figures of Anscombe and Heda pass the mouth of the cave, on that day when I awoke, or if these were but another of Zikali's illusions imprinted on my weakened mind by his will-power. For of what he and Nombé had told me I believed nothing. Thus marveling I fell into a doze and in my doze heard whisperings. I opened my eyes, and lo! there before me stood Anscombe and Heda. It was she who spoke the first, for I was tongue-tied; I could not open my lips.

"Dear Mr. Quatermain, dear Mr. Quatermain," she murmured in her sweet voice, then paused.

Now at last words came to me.

"I thought you were both dead," I said. "Tell me, are you really alive?"

She bent down and kissed my brow, while Anscombe took my hand.

"Now you know," she answered. "We are both of us alive and well."

"Thank God!" I exclaimed. "Kaatje swore that she saw you dead and buried."

"One sees strange things in the Black Kloof," replied Anscombe, speaking for the first time, "and much has happened to us since we were parted, to which you are not strong enough to listen now. When you are better then we will tell you all. So grow well as soon as you can."

After this I think I fainted, for when I came to myself again I was back in the cave.

Another ten days or so went by before I could even leave my bed, for my recovery was very slow. Indeed, for weeks I could scarcely walk at all, and six whole months passed before I really got my strength again and became as I used to be. During those days I often saw Anscombe and Heda, but only for a few minutes at a time. Also occasionally Zikali would visit me, speaking a little, generally about past history, or something of the sort, but never of the war, and go away. At length one day he said to me:

"Macumazahn, now I am sure you are going to live, a matter as to which I was doubtful, even after you seemed to recover. For, Macumazahn, you have endured three shocks, of which today I am not afraid to talk to you. First there was that of the battle of Isandhlwana where you were the last white man left alive."

"How do you know that, Zikali?" I asked.

"It does not matter. I do know. Did you not ride through the Zulus who parted this way and that before you, shouting what you could not understand? One of them you may remember even saluted with his spear."

"I did, Zikali. Tell me, why did they behave thus, and what did they shout?"

"I shall not tell you, Macumazahn. Think over it for the rest of your life and conclude what you choose; it will not be so wonderful as the truth. At least they did so, as a certain doll I dressed up yonder in the Vale of Bones told you they would, she whose advice you followed in riding toward Ulundi instead of back to the river where you would have met your death, like so many others of the white people."

"What was that doll, Zikali?"

"Nay, ask me not. Perhaps it was Nombé, perhaps another. I have forgotten. I am very old and my memory begins to play me strange tricks. Still I recollect that she was a good doll, so like a dead woman called Mameena that I could

scarcely have known them apart. Ah! That was a great game I played in the Vale of Bones, was it not, Macumazahn?"

"Yes, Zikali, yet I do not understand why it was played."

"Being so young you still have the impatience of youth, Macumazahn, although your hair grows white. Wait a while and you will understand all.

"Well, you lay that night on the topmost rock of Isandhlwana, and there you saw and heard strange things. You heard the rest of the white soldiers come and lie down to rest among their dead brothers, and depart again unharmed. Oh! What fools are these Zulu generals nowadays. They send out an *impi* to attack men behind walls, spears against rifles, and are defeated. Had they kept that *impi* to fall on the rest of the English when they walked into the trap, not a man of your people would have been left alive. Would that have happened in the time of Chaka?"

"I think not, Zikali. Still I am glad that it did happen."

"I think not too, Macumazahn, but small men, small wit. Also like you I am glad that it did not happen, since it is the Zulus I hate, not the English who have now learned a lesson and will not be caught again. Oh, many a captain in Zululand is today flat as a pricked bladder, and even their victory, as they call it, cost them dear. For, mind you, Macumazahn, for every man they killed two of them died. So, so!

"In the morning you left the hill—do not look astonished, Macumazahn. Perhaps those captains on the rock beneath you let you go for their own purposes, or because they were commanded, for though weak I can still lift a stone or two, Macumazahn, and afterwards told me all about it. Then you found yourself alone among the dead, like the last man in the world, Macumazahn, and that dog at your side; also a horse came to you. Perhaps I sent them, perhaps it was a chance. Who knows? Not I myself, for as I have said, my memory has grown so bad. That was your first shock, Macumazahn, the shock of standing alone among the dead like the last man in the world. You felt it, did you not?"

"As I hope I shall never feel anything again. It nearly drove me mad," I answered.

"Very nearly indeed, though I have felt worse things and only laughed, as I would tell you, had I the time. Well, then the sun struck you, for at this season of the year it is very hot in those valleys for a white man with no covering to his head, and you went quite mad, though fortunately the dog and the horse remained as Heaven had made them. That was the second shock.

"Then the storm burst and the lightning fell. It ran down the rifle that you still carried, Macumazahn. I will show it to you and you will see that its stock is shattered. Perhaps I turned the flash aside, for I am a great thunder-herd, or perhaps it was One mightier than I. That was the third shock, Macumazahn. Then you were found, still living—how, the white man, your friend, will tell you. But you should cherish that dog, Macumazahn, for many a man might have served you worse. And being strong, though small, or perhaps because you still have work left to do in the world before you leave it for a while, you have lived through all these things and will in time recover, though not yet."

"I hope so, Zikali, though on the whole I am not sure that I wish to recover."

"Yes, you do, Macumazahn, because the religion of you white men makes you fear death and what may come after it. You think of what you call your sins and are afraid lest you should be tortured because of them, not understanding that the spirit must be judged not by what the flesh has done but by what the spirit wished to do, by *will* not by *deed*, Macumazahn. The evil man is he who wishes to do evil, not he who wishes to do good and falls now and again into evil. Oh! I have hearkened to your white teachers and I know, I know."

"Then by your own standard you are evil, Zikali, since you wished to bring about war, and not in vain."

"Oho! Macumazahn, you think that, do you, who can not understand that what seems to be evil is often good. I wished to bring about war and brought it about, and may be what bred the wish was all that I have suffered in the past. But say you, who have seen what the Zulu power means, who have seen men, women and children killed by the thousand to feed that power, and who have seen, too, what the white power means, is it evil that I should wish to destroy the house of the Zulu kings that the white house may take its place and that in a time to come the black people may be free?"

"You are clever, Zikali, but it is of your own wrongs that you think. How about that skull that you kissed in the Vale of Bones?"

"Mayhap, Macumazahn, but my wrongs are the wrongs of a nation, therefore I think of the nation, and at least I do not fear death like you white men. Now hearken. Presently your friends will tell you a story. The lady Heddana will tell you how I made use of her for a certain purpose, for which purpose indeed I drew the three of you into Zululand, because without her I could not have brought about this war into which Cetewayo did not wish to enter. When you have heard that story, do not judge me too hardly, Macumazahn, who had a great end to gain."

"Yet whatever the story may be, I do judge you hardly, Zikali, who tormented me with a false tale, causing the woman Kaatje to lie to me and swear that she saw these two dead before her—how I know not."

"She did not lie to you, Macumazahn. Has not such a one as I the power to make a fat fool think that she saw what she did not see? As to how. How did I make you think in yonder hut of mine that you saw what you did not see—perhaps."

"But why did you mock me in this fashion, Zikali?"

"Truly, Macumazahn, you are blind as a bat in sunlight. When your friends have told you the story, you will understand why. Yet I admit to you that things went wrong. You should have heard that tale before Cetewayo brought you to the Vale of Bones. But the fool-woman delayed and blundered, and when she reached Ulundi the gates were shut against her as a spy, and not opened till too late, so that you only found her when you returned from the Council. I knew this, and that was why I dared to bid you fire at that which stood upon the rock.

"Had you heard Kaatje's tale you might have aimed straight, as also you would have certainly shot straight at me, out of revenge for the deaths of those you loved, Macumazahn, though whether you could have killed me before all the game is played is another matter. As it was, I was sure that you would not pierce the heart of one who might be a certain—white woman, sure also that you would not pierce my heart whose death might bring about her death and that of another."

"You are very subtle, Zikali," I said in astonishment.

"So you hold because I am very simple, who understand the spirit of man—and some other things. For the rest, had you not believed that these two were dead, you would never have left Zululand. You would have tried to escape to get to them and have been killed. Is it not so?"

"Yes, I think I should have tried, Zikali. But why did you keep them prisoner?"

"For the same reason that I still keep them and you—to hold them back a while from the world of ghosts. Had I sent them away after that night of the declaration of war, they would have been killed before they had gone an hour's journey. Oh! I am not so bad as you think, Macumazahn, and I never break my word. Now I have done."

"How goes the war?" I asked as he shuffled to his feet.

"As it must go, very ill for the Zulus. They have driven back the white men who gather strength from over the black water and will come on presently and wipe them out. Umnyamana would have had Cetewayo invade Natal and sweep it clean, as of course he should have done. But I sent him word that if he did so Nomkubulwana, yes, she and no other, had told me that all the spirits would be against him, and he hearkened. When next you think me wicked, remember that, Macumazahn.

"Now it is but a matter of time, and here you must bide till all is finished. That will be good for you who need rest, though the other two find it wearisome. Still for them it is good also to watch the fruit ripen on their tree of love. It will be the sweeter when they eat it, Macumazahn, and teach them how to live together. Oho! Oho-ho!" and he shambled off.

TO BE CONCLUDED

Conchita of the Laughing Eyes

by Hays Bell

Author of "Patrick Pegan Kelly—Head-Hunter."

EL PASO, ever alert and on tiptoe about something, was simply running over with military madness when I arrived as first sergeant in a regiment of militia rookies. Rumors of every sort were flying around. War was in the air, everywhere. Affairs with Mexico had reached a crisis, we were reliably informed.

One story said our troops had been ambushed and wiped out. General Pershing had just won a great victory against overwhelming odds. Some town down the river which began with Z, contained three rolling r's and ended in a resonant o had been raided by bandits. Thus it went. Every one of the three days since our arrival we innocent tenderfeet from the East had been fed verbal border "war babies" until we were at the pinnacle of horrible expectancy. A hundred-degree sun which glared on scorching pavement, brown-grassed slopes and far-stretching, sandy hills, seemed only to accentuate the violent nerve-tension.

Imagine, then, my consternation when the girl turned those eyes on me; deep, dark eyes all aglow down at the bottom, and said, "*Mil gracios, señor.*" She made me a bewitching courtesy too. All this because I returned a handkerchief she had dropped in passing.

No wonder I stood staring after her as she tripped gaily down the broad steps of the hotel. Poor dub, I was new on the border and thought all Mexicans were in Mexico.

"Orders from your general, sergeant," a thin, cracked voice exclaimed at my elbow. I turned to see a wrinkled old face, sparsely bearded, with trembling hand held in stiff military salute beside it.

"When you get down there keep your eyes to yourself," he continued. "Don't retrieve any hankies for 'em or one of them durn wimmin 'll git ye sure. Did ye happen to see her eyes, now?"

"Yes, I saw her eyes," I replied, astonished at his guess.

"That's it," he cackled. "It's their ding-busted eyes. They use 'em to lasso you and hogtie you. Afore you know it, yer hitched fer life. While yer over yonder," waving his hand toward the south, "keep the k-rect position of a soldier, chest out, back in and eyes to the front—most especially eyes to the front," he finished, with another bar of his falsetto mirth.

Military attitude was forgotten by now and I saw only an old man, a very aged man, in shabby blue uniform. Shrunken of face and bald of head, but with two merry twinkling eyes, drawn by a myriad wrinkles at the corners, which lit up his countenance and lied about his years. The left sleeve of his coat hung empty at his side.

"Sit down, General," I invited. "Tell me why I should wear blinders in Mexico."

"Not General," he replied, accepting my invitation. "Just a sergeant like you. Orderly-sergeant, in the old 4th Louisiana in '46, under Captain Mickey O'Brien, him as did not keep his eyes to the front. Poor Mickey—but then he liked it, so I guess it's not my funeral. I'm going to tell you about him and Conchita. Captain Mickey

O'Brien and Conchita of the Laughing Eyes, as everybody called her. Then you'll know why I say 'Eyes front and center.' It's a long story but 'twill teach you things about Mexico.

WE CROSSED the Bravo with old General Zach Taylor in September '46, down at Comargo. Wa'n't much fighting doing till we got down near Monterey. There we had a right smart of it.

But shucks, man, these Greasers can't fight—the only trouble we had, an' you'll have, is to git them to stand still long enough to be licked. They're such tarnation good retreaters. Officers—it's their fault. The men would fight all right if they had any one to lead them, but these Mexican officers is entirely too careful. "Go to it, boys! Eat 'em up!" they say to their men when a fight's on. Then Mr. Officer beats it back to the rear and arranges for another stand down at the next city.

"I'll give a hundred dollars, cold cash," old General Zach used to say—heard him myself—"to the man who shows me a dead Mexican officer. Anything from lieutenant up."

And to the time we finished taking Monterey, the offer hadn't cost him a nickel. Did you ever try to drive a pig? Head's always on the wrong end—don't "shoo" worth a cent. Soldiers are the same way. Coaxin' 'em always beats drivin'.

"You're not wantin' to hear that though. As I was saying, after we captured Monterey—and a right neat job we made of it—old Zach hits down after Santa Anna at Saltillo, leaving Company C of the 4th behind as a garrison. Too few men, of course, but the general didn't have soldiers to waste, and he knew old Company C under Captain O'Brien would stand up to the work.

Everything started off smooth enough. As soon as the natives learned that we wa'n't as bad as we'd been painted, and didn't have any new schemes for taxes or graft, they warmed up to us right smart. Mexicans ain't a bad lot when you treat 'em decent. Considering how they've been abused by them durned dictators that's been rulin' them off an on these three hundred years, it's surprisin' there's any good left in the race.

Every little while we'd hear of a bunch of bandits getting close, an' a squad would go out to chase them off, but mostly our job in Monterey was mighty soft an' satisfactory. Captain Mickey was only twenty-five years old, but he was six feet tall, with blue eyes and red hair.

A smile in his eye and a laugh on his lips—that was my captain. "The Happy Mick" they called him, but not when he was on duty or in command.

Some disciplinarian was Captain O'Brien. It was toe the mark or you were sorry —— quick! When he took the oath to get his soldier job, he meant it, every word. After Old Zach left him in Monterey, you'd 'a' thought the winning of the war depended on his keeping the town lined up.

Cap took quite a shine to me right off. Had me with him all the time—orderly-sergeant's job anyhow, you know.

Ye should ha' seen me in them days, my boy. Some man was I! Strong as a horse, and handsome too, if I do say it. First sergeant I was made on the strength of my arm, not of my head, and a right handy man I was to have around. Ask any of the old boys—but no, ye can't. They've—they've all gone. Let's see, that was seventy years this Fall. Gosh all hemlock! It makes me think I'm gettin' on.

Just how Mickey met Conchita I don't know; probably picked up her handkerchief. Anyhow, I want to tell you she was some woman. Belonged to one of them old Mexican familes who can trace their ancestors back through gold and muck, by crowns and gallows, most clear back to Noah's time, I reckon. Lived up in California somewheres, but had been caught there in Monterey visiting, along of her good-fer-nothin' brother, when the war started.

She owned some hundreds of thousands of acres of pasture-land up in the west coast, where there was so many cattle and horses no one ever tried to count them. She probably had more property in her own name than any heiress in the United States in them days. Educated, she was too, was Conchita. First in a mission out near Los Angeles, an' then in a girls' school in Washington, right up to the minute. Spoke English as good as I do. And looks—well when you get down there, give 'em the once-over, all of them, and you won't see any who would compare with her.

Small she was, but slim and round as a dancer. Little olive-white face with a smile growed right on it, and the cutest pair of dimples you ever did see. Her eyes, bright

and black and deep—did ye ever now see the sun breaking through the dark clouds on a June day after a thunder-storm? I can't tell you, boy, but you'll see it some day and then you'll know why every one above first sergeant was grovelin' at Conchita's little feet—natives and Americans alike.

Almost before I realized what was going on, the captain was taking early morning rides with that girl, he was going up to her house for supper and she was coming to officers' mess, along with her old fat, hairy-faced auntie to do the chaperoning. Such things were quite out of the usual down there. As a rule the high-class Mexicans won't consort with the poor white trash from north of the Rio Bravo, be they military or civilian. But Conchita had been in the States and knew what was what.

Always, of course, there were some other girls along at the parties to make things look right, but it was Conchita and Cap that fixed the games up. Both of them were sliding down that steep toboggan called "fallin' in love" and they sure enjoyed it fine.

I was more'n a little worried at first, for, like all the rest of Company C, I thought Cap a little tin god and didn't like to see him takin' up with a black-an'-tan. As a rule it don't work. Conchita, though, was outside all rules. By the time Mickey tipped it off to me that they were engaged and were to be married when the war finished, I was, most inclined to be as pleased as I told him I was.

Don't think, though, that in his amours Mickey had had no competition. One young lawyer there was in particular, a feller who'd been down to Mexico City to law school, named Don Ignacio Benevides. He was some love-maker himself. One advantage he had too, which was worth a lot: Conchita's brother Enrique was strong for the law guy and dead set ag'in' any truck between his sister and an American.

This good-fer-nothin' brother—why do the nicest girls nearly always have 'em?—had been educated in some American college in the East, too, but it didn't take. When he graduated and got back on the reservation again, he was all Indian and acted as though he had always worn a blanket and slept in a tepee.

You don't give a continental doggone for the law guy Ignacio and Enrique, of course. You want to hear about Cap marryin' Conchita. But, ye see, things ain't lived as fast as they're told an' besides it's two poor Mexicans who can't break up an engagement when they try. That's why you have to get acquainted with them two whether you want to or not.

"Looky here, Cap," I says to him one day, "if you and Miss Conchita are engaged and goin' to git married, why don't you announce it and scare that Ignacio guy and the rest of the bunch away from her?"

"Oh," he laughed, easy like, "they don't bother me and, besides, the chances are about a hundred to one that Conchita's family won't be dying to take an Irish-in-law to their bosoms."

"All right," says I. "If you can stand it, I can. But if she was my girl, I'd sure beat up a lot of these poachers, starting with Don Ignacio Benevides and following closely with that—with her brother Henry."

He haw-hawed again. Deaf, dumb and blind, them lovers is; can't see because they won't. I wanted to tip it off to Cap that brother was ag'in' him stronger'n horseradish, but Cap was just so durned pleased with himself and the wide world in general then, he was ready to love the whole Mexican race, in spite of the fact they were enemies and he was a soldier down there to fight 'em.

CAPTAIN MICKEY O'BRIEN wasn't forgetting business in his love-making. Not ten days after he got engaged, and about the time we heard old General Zach had pushed Santa Anna off the map around Saltillo, Cap called me in one morning.

"Lieutenant Forbes is going with a detail of thirty men down toward the Socorro ranch where one of our scouts say a strong band of Mexicans is congregated, contemplating an attack on us here," he says. "I mean to strike first. The force leaves just after dark tonight. You will go along. Keep mum, as no one but the officers know of it. If we can take these bandits by surprise, we'll teach them a lesson and definitely establish peace in this section."

We found the bandits at sunrise—found them all around us, up on the sides of the hill while we were down in a ravine. For fifteen minutes we staged as nasty a little fight as was ever pulled off out of an ambush. We killed a few, captured a bunch and scattered the rest of those ambushers.

But it cost us six men killed and twice that number shot up.

Just as we were trussing up the prisoners, getting ready to return to Monterey, I was knocked half out of my saddle to hear in English:

"Here, sergeant, you ain't going to tie me up, are you? I wasn't in this fight. Come down yesterday to look at a bunch of cattle and got here just in time to be pinched with this crowd of bandits."

It was Enrique. I was just going to ask the lieutenant to release him, but at that moment one of the other prisoners spoke up in Spanish.

"Remember, Don Enrique, you got us in this and you've got to get us out."

Now wasn't that hell? Enrique told the man not to worry, but he forgot that some of us had been living on the border for years and knew Spanish. When I tipped it off to the lieutenant he was a bit skeptical, but he left the ropes on Henry. At my suggestion we let him ride on a horse so we could keep him away from the rest of the prisoners.

Cap nearly keeled over when he learned that Enrique was mixed up in the mess, and was sore as an old hen about the fight.

"They must have learned we were coming. Some one——"

"Sure some one talked," I replied, "an' this little Henry boy looks a lot like him to me. Did he know of the expedition?"

"Why certainly not. No one but the officers knew. Of course, we talked something about it at dinner the other night and —yes, he was there. But it can't be possible."

"Suppose you sweat some of those other prisoners and see what they have to say."

They said enough. When Cap got through with them he came out of his tent with his mouth set in a straight line an' that "do your duty" look on his face.

"*Adios*," says I, when I saw him, "here's where we walk slow behind Henry!"

Pleasant it was for Mickey when you consider that Conchita thought the world and all of her worthless brother. I could see one nuptial knot cut before it was even tied. Shooting beloved Enrique would never make a captain's bride of Conchita, and at the same time I knew enough about our Irish leader to guess what would occur at sunrise.

"What is this wild story I hear—that you have Enrique under arrest?"

There she stood, pretty as any tiger-lily, but the smile and dimples were gone. Eyes, those marvelous eyes, had lost all the sparkle and taken on a calm, dangerous glint deep down in their black depths.

"Your brother is under arrest as a spy. He was captured in the fight at Alta Vista. The evidence shows that he informed the enemy of our expedition. Within an hour he will be tried by court-martial."

It was Captain O'Brien speaking—not the lover of Conchita.

"But he is my brother and I love him."

For a moment I feared she would open the flood-gates, and then I hesitate to think what might have happened. Us men so hate to see those we love suffering in such a distinctly feminine way. But she did not. No, she made the mistake of presuming on Mickey's love.

"I am an officer in the United States Army and I know my duty."

Saluting, he walked past her into his tent without another word or look. It took nerve, but my captain had nerve.

You may be sure the improvised military court gave Henry his. Took just about ten minutes to do it, all regular and shipshape. A dobie wall, with a blindfolded man standing before it. Six soldiers with leveled rifles. The officer gives an order, there is a flash of flame and a crumpled, lifeless heap lies where the man had stood.

Such was the picture my mind painted and I began to feel sorry for the foolish boy. Then I remembered that Enrique was a coward. He would beg and cringe to the last. Already he had gone groveling on his knees to Mickey, pleaded for his life, presuming—the pup—on the captain's passion for his sister. When I thought of our six dead boys and the poor devils in the hospital that minute, hovering between life and death, all because of the prisoner's treachery, I lost my pity.

NEWS of Enrique's fate had leaked out over the city, so we made the rounds of the town carefully, placed extra sentries, and took what precautions we could with our small force. This was to be our first execution and we were afraid the people would be peeved about it. I remember we had just returned in the late afternoon from an inspection trip over to the north side, when Don Ignacio Benevides

appeared with a request to see Captain O'Brien.

"Here's that lawyer son-of-a-gun outside here," I told Cap. "Probably he wants to explain to you that your court is on the bum and has no jurisdiction." I never was strong for that greasy-skinned guy, with his gold-headed cane, long, thin mustache and plug hat.

He hadn't been inside a minute before Cap appeared.

"Come in here and act as interpreter," he said. "Tell me what this gent has on his mind. I can *sabe* this lingo fairly well, but I must be off this time. Sounds to me as if he is saying that he was the spy and Enrique is innocent."

Darned if it wasn't so. I listened to Ignacio's tale once and then made him go over it again to be sure.

"I did it all!" he exclaimed, talking with his mouth, eyes and arms and through his nose all at once. "Don Enrique is an innocent boy. He never dreamed of such a thing. To kill him would be the most monstrous crime—and it would break his sister's heart. I am a patriot. I sent word that you were to attack. I arranged the ambush—I, Ignacio Benevides de Altuna. If I must die for it, well and good. I will die as a Mexican patriot should."

Some orator was Ignacio. His black eyes flashed fire, and he pounded his chest with clenched fists as he finished.

"All right," replied Captain Mickey to me, "tell him we'll accommodate him with much pleasure. Turn Enrique out. I'll apologize to him. Then chuck this gentleman in a cell. All we'll need to do is to change the name on that court-martial verdict and the execution will come off as originally ordered."

Now wouldn't that hamstring you? My opinion of Don Ignacio and the Mexicans in general rose about a thousand per cent. It's a mighty brave man who'll give himself to die for a friend, even though he's guilty.

Enrique was probably the most surprised individual west of the Red Sea when he was turned loose. Cap apologized to him like a gentleman and an officer. By the time he had finished, Henry, who had come in cringing, wore such a smirking, knowing look, I wanted to kick the dog. Captain Mickey would have knocked him down on the spot if he had even surmised what I was now sure of—that Henry thought the American had weakened because he was afraid of losing Conchita. We hadn't told him about Ignacio.

"Beat it, ye pup!" I ordered, after we came out of the captain's tent. "It ain't what you guess at all and if Mickey ever suspects that you've even thought it, he'll beat you within an inch of your pesky life."

"An' if he don't, I will," I added, while he stood there trying to think of a come-back. I was some man in them days and trimming Henry would have been just one joyful jest to me.

Captain Mickey orders out his horse and rides up to make his apologies to Conchita of the Laughing Eyes, but they told him she was out.

"Punishing him, she is," thinks I to myself, which shows what a lot I didn't know about women.

IT WAS a good two hours before daylight, next morning, when the guard called to say our prisoner wanted to see me. I was a good soldier, but night calls without excuse always did make me sore. That's one reason I'm not a doctor.

"Well, spit it out, Ignacio!" I exclaimed roughly, when I got over in the barracks to the room used for a jail. "Didn't the priest come?"

"*Si, señor*, oh, yes, sir, the priest came," he laughed nervously. "That's what frightened me. It made it seem so real I wanted you to come and talk it over." He winked at me and came up close. "Now about those guns. Just tell me that you will see to it personally, as a favor, you know, that the bullets are out. Of course, you have it all arranged, but if you would look after it yourself I would feel so much better. Not a wink of sleep have I had all night I have been so nervous."

Shades of Sammy Houston! All I could do was to stand and gape at him.

"Listen to me, Ignacio," I says when my voice came back, "if you're figuring on any guns being unloaded, or any of them boys missing, jest copper yer own bets."

After a while I made him understand that we were not staging any opery buffet. It was to be a real sure-enough execution, with him in the title-rôle as corpse. Then and there that Mexican threw a fit. He swore, he ranted, he wept like a baby.

"But she told me it was to be a mere

farce—that the guns were not to be loaded. I was to take Enrique's place because he is a coward and afraid to face a gun. Captain Mickey was to pretend to carry out the military court's order. The soldiers were to fire, I was to fall as if shot, they were to carry me away, then release me. Oh, she promised to be my wife if I'd do her this one trifling favor. All the time she knew—she meant to have me killed."

Not until I had promised I would call the captain could I break away. Ignacio spilled the whole story on me—lots more details than I can remember now. But the meat of it was, as I have told you—Conchita had put up a game on him to save her brother. That it was to cost Ignacio his life made no difference to her. Probably he was a nuisance as a lover, but killing him off was going pretty strong it seemed to me.

Cap was inclined to be pig-headed at first when I told him how matters stood; but after he had listened to Ignacio rant a while, there was nothing to it. He had to believe. We couldn't shoot an innocent man, even though he had confessed and been condemned.

"Ain't it hell?" says I to Mickey, as we walked back to quarters, him silent and not giving a hint about what he was thinking. "I suppose we'll have to call off the whole show now?"

"No, sergeant," says he, slow like, when he finally broke the silence, "I guess we'll go right ahead with it just as planned. Only don't use Ignacio. Have the men fire at the blank wall at sunrise. The populace will be expecting the noise of the volley, and it won't do to disappoint them."

Just as he ordered, so we carried it out. Our troops were camped near the old Mexican barracks, which I've told you we were using for a jail. Inside was a big open court—*patio*, they call it—where the Mexicans were wont to hold their own execution parties, so we did likewise. Everything went off in fine style, and we give out the report that Don Ignacio Benivides had been duly shot as a spy. The whole town had it within ten minutes.

I don't know whether you've guessed Cap's game or not. For quite a while I didn't get it. My job, as I told you, depended on my strong arm rather than my think-tank. But when I heard a voice at my elbow, half an hour later, and turned around, there stood an old friend I had more than half expected.

"Good morning, sergeant," he cried with a hearty laugh. "Well, I see you done for that nasty spy, Benivides. I shiver yet every time I think of the trouble he came near getting me into. Did he die like a good Mexican or was he a coward to the last?"

You've gussed it—Enrique, of course.

"I can't tell you much about it, Henry," says I, "but Captain O'Brien was there and has all the details. Come right in and hear it from his own lips."

Ten minutes later there was another volley and this time the squad did not fire against a blank wall. Enrique died like the coward he was.

THIS story ought to end here, but it don't. Don Ignacio had accompanied us back to thank the captain.

Down the cobbled street we heard a rattle of hoofs and a foam-flecked mustang dashed up to us. It was Conchita, or what was left of her. She was mounted bareback on that wild pony, with just a rope tied round its lower jaw. With her torn, bedraggled dress, and her hair, loosened from its moorings, pouring like a dark cloud down her back, for a moment I scarcely knew her. She looked pale and tired, and those beautiful eyes had lost their laughter. Now they gazed out wildly anxious.

Sliding to the ground, she grabbed Ignacio's hand as soon as she saw him.

"Oh, thank God, you are still alive!" she exclaimed. "*Madre mia*, how I have suffered! When I heard those shots I nearly gave up. Forgive me, dear friend—" she was crying now—"I didn't mean to do it. I wanted to get Enrique away. It was all to save him. He is all I have. My father and mother are dead. I love him for my whole family. He is only a foolish boy, anyhow. Once Enrique was free I was coming to Captain O'Brien to confess everything and liberate you. All is fair in war, no?

"But Enrique did not come home when he was released. I knew he might do something foolish unless he knew. They told me he had gone to the ranch. I rode there—twenty miles. He was not there. Returning, my horse threw me and ran away. I walked. I walked for hours and hours.

Look at my poor feet. Then I met a peon —it was nearly daylight—and he loaned me this pony. I did not mean to put you in danger. Oh, you must believe I would not do a thing like that. Mother of God, how I have suffered!"

She kissed his hand in that foolish way Mexicans have and wept tears all over it, while Ignacio stood there and looked foolish. All at once something occurred to him.

"But your brother, Enrique, they shot——"

She sprang to her feet. Captain Mickey came out of his tent just then. It all went off like a regular show on the stage.

"My brother," she turned to Cap, "did he come here?" With one hand clasping her bosom, she gasped out the words as if they hurt her.

I came to Mickey's rescue.

"He was executed this morning as ordered by the court-martial, *señorita*. Probably them was the shots you heard."

Her eyes turned to Mickey and we all did likewise. He gave her back look for look, though I could see the effort it was costing him.

"You, Mickey—you killed Enrique, my brother?" Her voice sounded pinched and strange.

"I did."

"You—you coward!"

Her last word rang clear. All the indecision was gone. She drew herself erect and at the same moment her right hand, which had been hidden in the folds of her skirt, came up with a pistol in it, pointed straight at Mickey's heart.

"I have nothing to live for now," she cried. "My brother dead—my lover a coward—let us see how a coward dies!"

Melodramatic—yes. But she wasn't throwing any bluff. That's the nature of them women down there.

Mickey never moved a muscle.

"Shoot," he says in a calm voice. "Shoot! I have but done my duty. Had I done less I would not have been worthy of your love—false to my country, my flag and the memory of those six brave boys who lost their lives at my orders. If I have lost your love, death is not unwelcome. Shoot!"

Mickey was only twenty-five, you know, and in love. They stood for a long minute looking into each other's eyes. God only knows what they read there. The rest of us were spellbound. I could not move to grab for that dangerous pistol she held so carelessly.

Mickey won. Her eyes—those wonderful black eyes—fell before his blue ones, and at the same time the pistol clattered to the ground. I thought she was going to fall and jumped to grab her, but Mickey was before me. As he clasped her in his arms, I saw the tears starting down her pale cheeks.

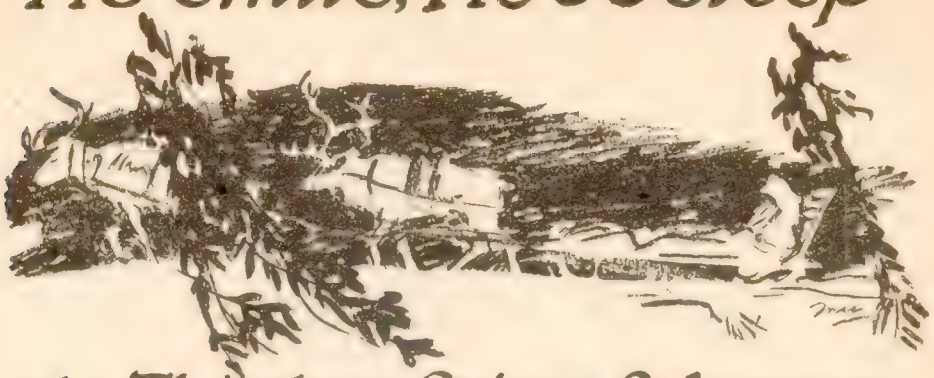
Clutching Ignacio by the arm, I hauled him away. It was no place for him or a rough-neck sergeant either.

SAGEBRUSH

by MARY CAROLYN DAVIES

WHITE, writhing, twisted bones along your way,
With leafage gray and withered. The plain seems
A weary ocean stretching far and gay
And blotting all the color from your dreams.

"He Smile; He Go Sleep"



by Theodore Seixas Solomons

"BETTER connect your mitts by a cord hung 'round your neck. Then when you use your bare hand the mitt will be hanging by your side, 'stead of getting lost."

It was the old roadhouse man that gave me that advice when I grew peevish at my own carelessness. I was a newcomer on that bleak, arctic coast of Alaska.

"Like as not mittens is hitched to you that way other places in the world, but up here we got it from our friends the Eskimos, that have growed to be a mighty keerful people. I never see loose mitts but what I think of little Lindseth, our first overland mail-carrier. When you git your supper, and your dogs is fed I'll tell you about him."

It was April, and already the days encroached upon the night. From the window of the sod-built roadhouse, Cape Deceit loomed close. Its form that of a crouching lion with forepaws in the sea, the roadhouse man, in spells of solitude, had fancied it ever intent to spring at the North Pole.

On the left lay the level, drifted, frozen tundra; on the right, the level, drifted, frozen sea; and you could hardy make out the line of shore between. But along that shore, somewhere beyond Deceit, must be the place of the story of Lindseth. I could tell that before the roadhouse man began the tale by the way his eyes went out over the cape and into the miles beyond.

Slowly, then, the roadhouse man began:

HE COME a-stumbling into the roadhouse with the mail-sack, one black, stormy night in December, himself and the sack just all enameled with fine drift snow. He seemed a small, drunken, whiskery, foreign feller of some kind. All I could make out of him first was, he says:

"I got soom mal," and "Have you got soom doks?"

He turned out to be a little Norwegian from way up around Hammerfest. He wasn't drunk—just all in and malemoot hungry. He was trying to tell me he was the Winter mail-carrier. And whether I had dogs or not was a mighty important thing to him, because he traveled with reindeer. He had left them on the haunches of the lion, where the deer-moss was thick under the snow and the pawin' good. It's over a mile to the cape, but he was afraid the dogs would sniff 'em.

There was one plucky little chap—happy, smiling—but so clean fagged and groggy-like his smile had seemed a drunken leer.

You see, it was unexpected. The Summer before, on top of the sudden gold strikes hereabouts, a post-office inspector had come up and made me master of the first post-office ever on the Arctic Ocean.

The wall above you, partner, was fixed with pigeon-holes then—we called 'em ptarmigan nests. And while the boats run, the mail came every trip. The last thing in the Fall I got a letter saying they couldn't tell for certain about no Winter overland

mail from Nome—whether or not they could get any one fool enough to tackle it. That's what the letter meant, anyway. Well, they had got a feller, you see. It was this here Val-hammer, or something, Lindseth.

Itwas the cruelest, most dangerous work—especially that first year or two, with the routes from Nome hardly worked out yet over the ranges of the Peninsula. And you had to go pretty near on schedule time, when there ain't no such thing in this blizzardy coast country. But us fellers was here, with our hustle, and Uncle Sam, I guess he figgered we had got to have our mail steady, like in the States.

You couldn't get a regular American to take it—not for the little money the Government paid. So men like Johansen, that I'm going to tell you about, would bid on it, and then get some poor, broke devil of a feller-countryman, who sabe'd snow and wind-travel, to do the work.

This first time, a man named Johansen was the contractor, and give the bond. And he sublets to Lindseth, and, of course, is responsible for him. Beyond that, all he does is go good for a couple of borrowed deer; and the difference between what the Government gives him and the still poorer pay he allows Lindseth is his profit. Fine business!

Lindseth had carried mail in the old country, some, but never before in this. He hadn't been over fer long, I judged from his lingo which was comical queer. He couldn't make me sabe what he tried to tell me about the trip, so—impulsive—he pulled out his diary to show me. It was written in Norsk, y' understand! And right away it come to him, and he laughed and laughed. He was proud of his job and heedful to do it right—and he put down everything in this here little diary.

When he left in the morning he wished me all kinds of "gude lock," and he shook my hand like he was pumping water to put out a fire. Then off for "my der"—his reindeer that was standing like carved things on the skyline of the cape.

In an hour, mebbe, I seen the outfit away yonder on the salt ice, giving the road-house dogs a wide berth. In about a week he come circling back to the cape again, just in from the Mission, on the return run to Teller and Nome.

After that first round trip in December, he done it again all right in January, and then in February, but in March he was way overdue from Nome. Well, I didn't wonder, none. It had been mighty mean weather for quite a spell, each day worse than the last. And on that peach of a route they'd give him—there wasn't but one or two straggling camps the whole two hundred miles from Teller—he must a' had the blizzard in his face pretty near all the time.

Figure it, partner, day after day, with no shelter at all—for he couldn't of pitched a tent it he'd had one—going up against that blinding wind! Cold grub and a shivery bag in the blind dark, and then grope for your deer and on again in the blind daybreak. Following down Ballarat to the Good Hope River, striking out over the breaking crust of the tundra for some bulkin' headland, and then the last long lap of coast, with the wind on a free sweep at yer from the open arctic seas! You'd be liable to be held back, some, wouldn't you?

When it cleared, I missed my dogs—all but old Mullykelly. Out of doors, I took a good look around, and, as my eyes swep' over toward the cape, "Thunder!" says I, for I see deer browzing, and the breeze this way! Them half civ'lized wolves of mine had smelled 'em and lit out.

I threw all the harness in the sled, hitched in Mullykelly, and we put for the rising ground. The old husky kept the empty sled moving brisk, and I run behind on the hard-packed snow.

We got there in plenty time. The foxy deer had run for a draw, where there was brush and the snow was soft. And there they stood at bay, with lowered antlers. The dogs was yelping and floundering around in the deep drifts, but they daren't run in on them.

I called the rascals out and hitched them up, and followed back on the deer tracks to where the deer had left the beach, two or three miles the other side the cape. We run along the edge of the salt ice for mebbe an hour more before we come on his camp—if you could call it a camp!

Just right on the beach, in the blizzard, he'd unhooked. His sleeping-bag was laid out on his sled; the little cooking outfit he carried—it didn't amount to nothing—was close by; and the mail-sack set there, too, without no lock, and the strap pulled loose.

There was no tracks left on the beach—the blizzard had seen to that. But back on

the tundra a piece, where the deer tracks we'd been following led from, was where he'd tethered the reindeer. The stakes was in the centers of circles beat deep in the snow, where the deer had gone cold and hungry with waiting, and had run round and round till they'd twisted loose and struck out for the good moss at the cape.

For miles all round the snow and the snow-covered ice was smooth and slick, like the earth and sea was one big plain-frosted cake. Just them late-made deer tracks back on the tundra—nothing more. So where was the use of trying to make out where little Lindseth had put for?

I just mushed back to the roadhouse, and fired in a report by Candle City, from where there was regular miner travel, now, by the timber route. I just give the P. M. at Nome the facts.

Well, pretty soon I get the official acknowledgment by another carrier; and they say they've sent out word everywhere to be on the lookout for Lindseth. Also I get a hot letter from Johansen, the contractor. He was sure sore. He said there had been two envelopes of currency in big denominations in that registered sack, addressed to the manager of the English Syndicate at Noatak, beyond the Mission.

The sack open—the little devil gone—and I'm responsible, writes Johansen; and he promises to foller his letter quick.

He did. He come in on a fast team of double-hitched malamoots with bells and tassels. But there wasn't no bells or tassels on Johansen. He was one of these educated, business fellers of the cities, and fly as they make 'em. But he was sure a grieving Swede.

"We got to track him," he says, "and find out which way he skipped.

"Well," said I, "you got to be a snow clairvoyant to do that because there ain't no tracks. An Eskimo might——"

He jumped at that, though I hardly meant it.

"That's the stuff," he says. "The best trailer they've got."

That was Abenrunyak, of course. His consumption kind of give him second sight. I got him down from the village that afternoon and told him the story. He wouldn't promise nothing, but he took us out on the open tundra and showed us how the drift lines of that last long storm run almost parallel, yet interlaced a little, like the strands of a woman's hair. The most was of the last day's blow; underneath was some of the day before; and, underneath again, just showing here and there, was fewer ones from the three days blow before that.

The winds in the blizzard season are watches and barometers and thermometers to these Eskimos. It's the one biggest thing in their lives, partner, and they study it almighty close.

Being the postmaster here, it was up to me to go along, and I was glad to. For about this happy little Lindseth being no good I couldn't just seem to make up my mind. Yet it looked pretty black agin him.

WE TOOK some grub and our sleeping-bags, and slid out early. Johansen and me was for making toward the nearest cross ridge, where the tracks of his mukluks or skis would most likely show in the wind-swept, half-bare ground. But Abenrunyak pointed out them lines on the snow that the wind had wrote just before the deer came in, and we seen that it must have been pretty near from the south, and no man could have faced it inland. So we hit the salt ice and headed around the cape.

I hated the weather that day, used as I was to this blustery coast. There was just wind enough to whip up a nasty snow-dust that deviled the eyes of you as you scanned for tracks. But it was a northerly wind, and that tickled the Eskimo, for he made us see that this opposite wind would rip up some of the thin layers of snow that had drifted over the tracks and give us a chance to locate the trail of the little mail-man.

So we took it easy and zigzagged along between the winrows of crushed up shore ice and a big, open tide track. But there was nothin' doin' on tracks, unless you'd call seal wriggles tracks.

Suddenly Abenrunyak pointed down the beach. We looked down there, and we seen a black speck among the gray brush of a little gully. When we come opposite to it, we left the sled and walked up the draw to the black spot, and what do you suppose it was? A big, reindeer mitt set over the end of an old willow stake that some fool stampeder had planted for to locate a placer claim in that God-forsaken bit of a gulch. And, close by, snuggled in the brush, was the owner of the mitt—Lindseth, froze, and

dead and natural as life, except for looking some gray and glazy.

There he was, with only just a skim of clean, dry snow in the creases of his deer-skin coat. The right hand was pulled up inside his sleeve, but the other was clasped bare at his neck, where he'd unbuttoned not only the coat but his shirt underneath, too. And he was smiling in that queer little tired, half-drunken way.

The thoughts are sweet of them that freeze, as men have told me that was rescued after the drowsy time come on them. But Lindseth's thoughts must have been more than common tender. We three different kind of men looked down on him for quite a spell before we spoke.

"He wasn't able to get very far from his camp," said Johansen in a kind of strained voice; but in a minute he come close and knelt down; and I did, too—I was curious about his closed hand at his throat.

I see the hand was grasping a little chain that was around his neck. And, very slow and careful, I drawed at the chain, and out come a small, old-fashioned locket, brass, I guess, and made in the year One. It opened easy enough, but all there was inside was a tiny curl of fine-spun, yellow hair. I shoved the locket back again in the hand.

This Johansen, meantime, was feeling round the clothes, and he located a bulging breast pocket, on the same side as the bent-up arm.

"This feels like the big envelopes of yellow-backs," he says very hopeful, and he starts to move the hand down, so he can shove his own hand inside the breast.

"Hold up," says I, ugly, "you're pulling this feller's hand away from his locket."

"And what if I am?" says he. "Ain't I got a right to get at this money he stole?"

"Here," says I, handing him my open jack knife. "You slit the coat, if you like, and get at the pocket that way. But you let that there hand be!"

Well, he did that, and he cut——careful, believe me! And out he drew the two long, fat envelopes, and, with them, the little feller's Norsk diary.

"It's funny," says Johansen, looking down at his little dead friend that had been buckin' a hundred per cent. of the blizzards for fifty per cent. of the pay. "It's funny he'd start for to make a getaway with nothing to eat and no sleeping-bag."

Abenrunyak touches me on the shoulder. The eyes of the gaunt native were burning above his hollow cheeks. He pointed to the stake that Lindseth had found.

"Only one mitten," he said.

True enough—the hand in the sleeve was as bare as the one at the throat.

Then Abenrunyak knelt down and withdrew the locket, opened it, and looked long at the little blond curl inside. And he pushed back the hood from the forehead and looked also at the blond hair of little Lindseth. Carefully he drew the hood; gently he closed the locket and slipped it back. Then he rose up and looked at Johansen and says quietly—

"This man no steal."

"Sure he didn't!" burst out from me.

"We go some more? We find 'em camp? We look see? Abenrunyak showed more interest than I ever seen him show in anything before.

Well, we took Lindseth by the head and feet—he was easy carried that way—to the long basket sled of his alive friend, the per centage mail contractor. And then you ought to have seen that Eskimo find and take the back tracks of the little Norway man.

The new wind, sure enough, had stripped the top strands of the snow and bared a toe mark here and there—that's all. But to a consumptive native that's a-plenty, even when it's a squirmy, twisting trail, like that was. He followed it, and we followed him.

"He try turn round, but too much wind in face," said Abenrunyak. "The little man, he try, he try!"

Fighting to get back! And no man making a getaway with money would have been doing that. It was enough for me.

"But why did he start away from his own camp?" I asked the native, when he straightened up from coughing to get his breath.

"*Kano-ma-kee*," he says, and that's the Eskimo for "You can search me."

The slow, hard work made Johansen grumble. What was there at the mail-carrier's camp, he wanted to know, worth chillin' ourselves to death for? An old sled, and a bag, and a few rusty pots! He was all for the roadhouse, and the Nome trail next day.

"And tell everybody he was froze with the stolen money on him?" says I.

It stuck in my craw, and in the native's, too, it seemed like, for the Eskimo leans

down to the trail and is off once more, with me after him. The big Swede has to shut up and foller along.

An idee came to me just after that, and I run back to Johansen and got him to pull out the diary book to see if there was anything happened in Teller. It was not wrote in Johansen's own brand of Norsk, but he made it out, all right. And there, sure enough, on his last trip away from Teller, when the post-office man give him his mail, Lindseth had wrote:

He put on no lock. I ask him twice.

"You see," says I, "he broke no locks."

"But why did he take the money, and why did he leave the camp?" insists Johansen, and the questions was sure stickers.

I just looked for a minute at the sailor patches all over the little man's clothes, and then I run forward again to the native, who was dodging around the shore hummocks on a plainer trail of tracks. In a minute or two them tracks led into the beach at Lindseth's camp, and right to the bag on the sled!

We watched the native, curious. He drops on his hands and knees at the sled and starts back over the tracks again, awful slow, looking and feeling and poking on both sides. It was no part of his job to do more than trail the man to his camp, and he had sure done that, and done it where no white man could of that ever lived. But there he was, down in the stinging snow, craft and zeal and fellow-kindness shining in them sunk eyes, searching for God knows what.

For half an hour he ferreted, peering close up at every inch of drift on either side, a-creeping farther and farther from the sled, till, all of a sudden, from a little rising spot, he pulls from the snow—the other mitten!

Abenrunyak shook it out and brought it to the Swede.

"Mr. Johansen," he said, "this little man he fight the wind all day. Light no more, he stop here—cold, tired—so tired he no eat. But he let 'em reindeer eat. He fix 'em on tundra. He unroll sleeping-bag on sled. He open bag. So all ready him get in—see? Then he pull strap of mail-sack to get paper money to put in pocket, so if bad white man come in dark when him sleep, he no can steal 'em from sack. But he no can put paper money in pocket with big mitten on hand.

"Eskimo tie mitten with seal hide string over neck. Lindseth mittens no tied. He take off mitten from this hand and lay mitten down. He turn round to get mail-sack. Wind blow mitten little way. He no see. This hand take money papers from sack, put 'em in pocket. Then he turn back again to pick up mitten. Mitten go. He walk; look; see mitten go way like little rabbit. Plenty dark, plenty cold. Lindseth walk, look; mitten go, go. Him Lindseth poor man. No other pair mittens. He fraid hand freeze next day. He walk little more; look; feel. Blizzard strong!"

Abenrunyak had been stooping and groping and staring, like he himself was Lindseth. And his face—his face, it says:

"I'm just one little man a-feeling out with my hands into the great, roaring arctic blizzard—a-feeling for its heart!"

"Eyes no see," he whispers to us. "He no care for mittens now. Just care get back to camp, that's all. He lost, he lost. He twist, turn, fight wind. By and by he come land. He crawl on hands-knees to place with little bushes. He hungry for rest. He thirsty for sleep. But he afraid he never wake, and snow drift over him, and you no find you money. So he crawl round, and crawl round till he come against willow stick. Then he put him mitten on stick. Him mitten black. He know you see plenty far."

Abenrunyak stood by the sled.

"He sure, now, you no lose 'em your money, so he no more think of money. He think——"

The Eskimo's hand closed over the cold hand that clasped the little locket, and a tear fell from his hollow eyes.

"He think of little girl with hair. He smile; he go sleep."

Fair Salvage

by Arthur D. Howden Smith

Author of "The Sinews of War," "Heroes All" etc.

MCCONAUGHY emerged from the dingy smoking-room companionway and spat disgustedly overside.

"Hecht!" he muttered. "Isna there a corrner o' the dirrty ship wi'out a stink?"

He glanced up and down the slatternly decks of the *Giorgi Papastopoulos* and the disgust on his face deepened.

"Filth, dirrt an' bugs, above an' below. Now, if I were a man o' sporrtin' procleevities, I'd lay a small wager ye'd find some manner o' contameenation in the trucks."

The gigantic figure of Jock Grant, McConaughy's first officer, rounded the deckhouse from for'ard.

"Ha' ye seen to the men, Jock?" asked McConaughty.

"Ay, skipper, they're weel enough, but crawlin' wi' verrmin an' a' ready tae mutiny."

"I'll not blame them," answered McConaughy. "I could mutiny maself. But what else could we do? Man Jock, this tub o' muck was the only craft out o' Alexandrria in the comin' forrtnight—an' back to Belfast we must go. It's long enough we ha' been away. We're no sourrce o' profit to the ownerrs, ye'll perrceive, travelin' passengers."

Jock nodded.

"Richt, sir. But ye'd best drop a worrd tae the men. They'll ken yer reasons if they hear them. But they thirrd-class quarrters—I'm nae put oot by a bit roach or rat, but——"

He shook his head gloomily.

"Ha' ye seen Evan?" inquired McConaughy after a pause.

"Whiles back. He was hangin' aboot the engine-room hatch, wi' a passion o' longin' i' the e'e o' him. I doot——"

Evan Apgar, Welsh engineer and apostle of efficiency, hauled himself up the forecastle companionway in time to hear the last words.

"Ye pig Scoots natural!" he shrilled. "Waad ye taak' words on me pe'ind me back?"

"Whist, Evan mon," placated Jock. "I was but tellin' the skipper——"

"Ha' done, the two o' ye," ordered McConaughy. "Men o' your age an' poseetion fightin' like 'prentices! Where ha' ye been, Evan? Jock was just sayin' he saw ye by the engine-room hatch. 'Twas I asked him."

The belligerency faded from Evan's dark, earnest face, but his wiry body still quivered with half-suppressed emotion.

"Oh, skipper," he wailed, "if ye could put see t'e engine-room! Harlant & Wolff puilt 'er."

"What?" exclaimed McConaughy. "She's Belfast built?"

"Ay. T'e shaame o' it! I ha' peen just now in t'e engine-room. Put 'tis no engine-room; 'tis a heap o' rust an' flaake-iron, shiftlessness an' corruption. Nefer tit I see the like o' it whateffer. An' t'e tefil what apides town t'ere, 'e jappered at me in 'is 'eathen speech an' 'is men come arfter me wi' shofels—me, whaat had come town for

to paas t'e time an' consult on t'e mysteries o' our trate."

"Aw weell, Evan, the loon couldna ha' kenned yer lingo," suggested Jock. "Ye wadna bide the comin' o' dagoes ye couldna underrstan' i' yer own——"

"They're no cor·dial on this ship," interrupted McConaughy. "I'll stand by Evan to that extent. Ye may say what ye like, Jock, I ha' never met seamen o' any race the like o' these. I'd sooner sail wi' Gerrmans. Ay, indeed. A Gerrman Dutchman will ha' appreeciation for the fine points o' discoorse o' seamanship. But I ha' spoke the masther o' this cesspool an' all he'll do by way o' answer is touch his cap an' mutther what sounds more the like o' currsin' than friendly speech. Evan holds good grounds o' arrgyment, Jock."

"'Tis not to pe arrgyet," protested Evan. "Why, t'e peak o' ma desire was for a piece o' waaste petween ma fingers an' t'e smell o' t'e grease. Put he woultna let me—t'e currse o' Penhallock on him!"

"A Welsh currse will ha' small results on a Catholic," observed McConaughy.

"I'd ma doots there was somewhat wrong wi' this ship," said Jock wisely. "That wull explain a'."

"What explains all?" demanded McConaughy.

"They'll be Catholics, ye say."

"A sorrt o' Catholics, Jock. Not the kind we know, d'ye see, but a kind o' Catholic Catholics. Ye might say the Catholics are Prrotestants to these ones."

"Is thaat so, inteet?" Evan had forgotten his troubles. "Put 'tis surpriset I am, Skipper, for ye to give t'e naame o' Prrotestants to aany set o' Paapists."

"Ye ha' the wrong grasp o' ma remarrks, Evan," returned McConaughy. "I ha' no such meanin' in ma mind. Besides, ye'll concede we ha' met some few Catholics ye might be proud to ha' Prrotestants."

"Ay, maype so. Put——"

"SKIPPER," interrupted Jock excitedly. "Starrboarrd, there! Twa, three points off the quarrter! D'ye see yon darrk bit thing—ey?"

"A submarine!"

"One o' ours?" ventured Evan.

McConaughy snorted.

"An English submarine wouldna steal up the like o' that. She's comin' toward us, what's more. Now, isna this a commentary on the seamanship o' the crew we ha' to trust in? They'll not yet ha' sighted the Dutchman."

But at that very moment an hysterical babble of voices rose from the bridge, and feet padded over the decks. Bells clanged in the engine-room; orders were shouted and countermanded. People ran about screaming and waving their arms or else watched the lean, shining hull of the submarine rise slowly to the surface, sloughing off the green waves of the Mediterranean as it slid rapidly toward them. Presently, a man appeared on the top of the conning-tower, which had been all that was visible when Jock first sighted the strange craft.

"They'll ha' their gun worrkin', or a torpedo, perrhaps," continued McConaughy. "Ay, there they go."

The man on the conning-tower was joined by several others and they scrambled over the slippery deck, clinging to a light hand-rail, to reach the mechanism of the lid that shut down on the three-inch gun the submarine carried forward.

"She'll pe on us in fife minutes," said Evan. "Whaateffer——"

Again the bells jangled in the engine-room of the *Giorgi Papastopoulos*, and the rhythmic jar of the engines slowed and then ceased entirely.

"Is the loon daft?" gasped Jock.

"No, he'll be feared," said McConaughy grimly.

The little knot of figures on the fore-deck of the submarine scattered apart and a faint report drifted over the water. A shell dropped just ahead of the steamer's bow. The *Giorgi Papastopoulos* responded with an insistent mournful tooting of her whistle.

"Well, ma men, 'tis a Gerrman prison-camp for ye, or——"

McConaughy paused significantly.

"We're wi' ye, skipper," Jock promptly assured him. "Gie us the worrd."

Evan silently started in the direction of the engine-room hatch.

"I hafe ma refolfer, put a spanner 'll to just as well," he flung over his shoulder. "Jock, send me ma men."

"There'll be no need," McConaughy reassured him. "Leave it to me."

He and Jock headed for the bridge ladder.

The submarine had not fired again, but was still approaching.

"'Tis a close business," panted McConaughy as he ran. "But we'll mak' it, Jock, or I'll know the reason why."

"Ay, skipper," was all Jock said.

They burst up the ladder upon a scene of pitiful confusion. The master of the *Giorgi Papastopoulos* was running back and forth with tears streaming from his eyes. The first officer and the watch officer were huddled under the binnacle, or as nearly under it as their bulk would permit; one quartermaster was sheltering behind the wheel-house and another was donning a lifebelt, apparently preparatory to a hasty plunge overside.

McConaughy wasted no time in words.

"Tak' the wheel, Jock," he ordered.

His own first move was to switch the indicator of the engine room telegraph to "Full speed." His next was to grasp the weeping captain by the shoulder and jerk him around.

"D'ye speak any English?" he rasped.

"Ver' leetle," gasped the Greek amazedly.

"Was it your intention, man, to surrender all the innocent people aboarrd your ship to the merrcies o' Gerrman pirates? Wad ye see the women an' childerrn thrust into sma' boats in the open sea? D'ye know what would happen to ye if ye ever came into Alexandrria or any other English porrt again?"

"N-n-n-n-no," sputtered the captain, waving his hands desperately.

"Proceed wi' your ship, then."

"But he—dat submarine—he shoot my sheep!"

"He'll shoot it if you don't go ahead."

"But thees ees Greek sheep!"

'Ye zany! D'ye think that makes any difference wi' a Gerrman submarine? Answer me this: Ye ha' English goods aboarrd, ha' ye not? Ay! An' French goods? An' d'ye think they'll let ye go? They'll put a torrpedo or a bomb into ye the minute they come up! What will your ownerrs say to that, ma man? Ownerrs are the same, Greek or British."

McConaughy glanced overside as he spoke. The *Giorgi Papastopoulos* was beginning to move slowly through the water. Below-decks he could feel the engines resuming their normal pulse. From every quarter of the ship rose a tumult of yelling, screaming, praying and commands. The Levantine passengers of the cabins and the third-class and steerage were frantic with fright, and the vessel's crew, if anything, were worse. But apparently the submarine had not suspected as yet that her warning shot was being disregarded.

"Keep to your courrse, Jock," McConaughy admonished his first officer at the wheel. "We'll ha' maybe an even chance—no more, an' not much less, I hope."

He administered a hearty kick to the nearest quartermaster and jerked the man to his feet.

"Where d'ye keep your signal flags?" he demanded of the captain.

The Greek dumbly indicated the signal locker.

"Orderr this man to set the International signal: 'Not under control. Helm does not answer.' That may give us a few yards."

The signal was duly set, as the steamer picked up her speed and began to move ahead at a faster rate.

"That's betther," remarked McConaughy. "It's touch an' go, but——"

The submarine fired again, and this time the shell fell uncomfortably close, splashing spray over the bridge-screens.

"He will ha' smelled our thrick."

The Greek captain, now somewhat recovered from his fright, pushed forward with open hostility.

"W'at you do on thees bridge? Eet is onlawful you come 'ere. Remove!"

McConaughy glanced down at him contemptuously.

"Rremove, is it? I will that, ma man, if ye'll promise me ye'll not deeliverr us up to the pirates."

"My sheep—I sail 'er," protested the captain. "You 'ave no right!"

"An' that's indisputable," McConaughy conceded more equably. "Ye must ha' some good in ye afther all. Jock, the man will ha' the right o' us. Give up the wheel."

With manifest reluctance, Jock turned over the wheel to one of the quartermasters and stepped aside.

The submarine fired a third shell, which went wide.

"If there's anything I can do," suggested McConaughy. "Maself or ma men——"

"Zere is nosink," replied the Greek coolly, and he glanced suggestively at the bridge-ladder.

"Ye're no' very grateful to a man who may ha' saved your ship," commented Mc-

Conaughy. "But I'll expect ye to stick to it, now."

With which parting admonition he followed Jock down the ladder, heedless of the scowls of all the Greeks and the open curses that were addressed at him as soon as his back was turned.

"Now, Jock," he said, when they had regained the upper deck, "we must clear the people out o' the sterrn. 'Tis there the shells are most like to hit, an' these dago loons willna think o' it. Get your men an' drive all ye find for'ard—passengerrs and crew."

Jock's task proved easier than he had expected. By vigorous gestures toward the pursuing submarine, the Scotchman and his helpers succeeded in conveying the reasons for their commands to the frightened passengers, but as for the crew, they searched high and low, but could find not a single man, until at last Jock noticed the heel of a sea-boot projecting from one of the lifeboats slung on the port davits.

McConaughy betook himself to the engine-room. Here he found Evan Apgar huddled at the head of the ladder leading down into the maze of boilers and machinery, a heap of loose nuts of divers sizes and threads before him. As McConaughy stooped to enter the companionway, Evan snatched up a nut and hurled it at a shadowy figure that stole from behind a boiler some twenty feet below. A yell, and the figure vanished.

"Ye ha' the right idea, Evan," McConaughy said approvingly. "Don't be lettin' the scoundhrels soldier at the job."

"No fear!" rejoined Evan. "T'e nuts is petter nor spanners. I ha' maate 'em unterstaan' we must ha' steam—an' more steam!"

"What will she do, d'ye figure?"

"Fifteen, maype sixteen knots. She's a mail-poat."

"A mail-boat! This hull o' stinks! I'd never ha' believed it, Evan."

"T'e engines is t'e pest paarrt o' 'er." Apgar glanced lovingly at the giant cylinders and pistons that thrust back and forth. "She was a greaat poat in 'er tay, sir."

"Can ye keep her going at top speed?"

"Ay," said Evan briefly, a nut poised ready in his hand.

"If ye want help, let me know. Ye'll get it. If we're caught now these Greeks will lay the blame for running on us, an'—ye know!"

Evan nodded.

"She'll no' to whaat she could if I 'ad ma own men town t'ere, put t'e daagoes will to t'eir pest."

"Remember, it's two hours to dark," McConaughy reminded him, pausing with one hand on the door. "Give us but two hourrs, an' we'll dodge the Dutch."

Without answering, Evan leaned forward slightly and sent a reverse-thread clinch-bolt singing down the engine room at a man who had crouched momentarily on a pile of waste and oil-cans by the stoke-hold entrance. Simultaneously, he reached for a second bolt and bellowed a raucous curse at a fat little man in a uniform-cap who ventured out from the control-platform, a few feet distant. The fat little man emitted a fat little squeak and dropped down the short ladder to the post he had quitted.

"T'e chief," explained Evan perfunctorily. "T'e maan has no 'eart for his engines, put I ha' feared him."

McConaughy smiled and retired to the deck. All was going well so far. He noticed with satisfaction that the passengers had been driven forward, while Jock Grant and a capable party of their own men were enjoying themselves jerking the Greek sailors from the life-boats into which they had scrambled at the first hint of trouble. Ahead, the sun was setting slowly and from the port quarter wafted the hot wind that blows off the sands of Northern Africa. McConaughy noted these facts instinctively. His eyes were trained on the distant submarine, sliding through the water at a speed little less than that of the liner.

"We ha' gained on her," he muttered to himself. "She'll mak' heavy weather o' seas that willna give us throuble."

The gun on the under-sea boat barked and a shell burst just aft of the steamer's taffrail, a few shrapnel pellets clinking against the stern plates.

"Ay, shoot," McConaughy admonished the Germans, as the twilight deepened. "'Tis little enough good 'twill do ye!"

As if in answer to this taunt, the gun opened a furious bombardment, hurling shell after shell toward the fleeing liner. But barring a few stanchions and some deck-litter no harm of consequence was done.

II

NIGHT shut down dark and starless. The warm wind from Africa struck colder air-strata that were tinged by a breath from the far-off Alps, and a silvery mist sprad over the waters.

The *Giorgi Papastopoulos* drove on at headlong speed, panic nipping the souls of her crew. Her engines, once the noblest work of Scots craftsmen, now rusted hulks of groaning metal, labored with stubborn faithfulness, bearing up under a burden they should never have been asked to stand. Her crew cowered in protected corners, ever with an eye astern for the menace of the submarine they were not yet confident of having escaped.

Nobody thought of watching the course ahead. That way beckoned safety; behind lay danger. And the mist and the darkness wrapped the vessel closer and closer as she sped her path of destiny.

McConaughy remained on watch until he was confident the submarine had been eluded. An hour after the mist fell to reinforce the veil of darkness, he was convinced that there was no chance of the Germans finding them. A choppy sea had sprung up that slowed the steamer's progress and must have far more effect on the rolling hull of a slender U-boat. With a sigh of relief and an inward prayer of gratitude, he told Jock and Evan to abandon their guard-duty on the several divisions of the Greek crew and see to it that their own men had some rest. Himself, he retired to the cabin which he shared with his officers in the first-class quarters, if anything could be called first-class on the *Giorgi Papastopoulos*. Later Jock and Evan joined him, and after a vigorous denunciation of their surroundings, a regular preliminary to slumber since the voyage began, they rolled into their bunks.

In the dim hours that come between midnight and the dawn, McConaughy awoke with the sudden alertness that is a characteristic of men of action in all professions. His ear caught at once the steady throbbing of the engines, the beat of the twin screws, the strain and murmur and unrest of the hull. All was as it should be, his seaman's sense reassured him. Yet he was vaguely uneasy.

He looked through the cabin's porthole into a blank wall of misty darkness. Water lapped the sides; the bow rose and fell crunchingly over the short rollers. And suddenly, with the abruptness of a lightning-bolt, there came a grinding shock that tossed him clear across the cabin into Jock's berth.

Glass broke, crockery crashed, furniture, fittings and cargo surged through compartments and holds. A thud on the upper decks told of the collapse of the topmasts and wireless gear. Wild yells and howls outdid the uproar of the afternoon before. The quiver of the shock had not died away when doors began to slam and racing feet jarred the decks and gangways.

McConaughy was knocked breathless by the force of his impact upon Jock's bony knees, and Jock was too startled by his skipper's onslaught and his own sudden awakening to grasp the situation immediately. But Evan swarmed lithely down from his upper bunk and slipped into trousers and shirt in the twinkling of an eye.

"She'll hafe took grount," he averred as he dressed rapidly.

"L-like enough," gasped McConaughy. "Man, Jock, but ye're harrd in your bones!"

"Whut for ha' we a' this clamor?" rejoined Jock with the grumpiness of any large man awakened from a sound sleep. "Dinna ye——"

McConaughy hit him a sounding thump on the shoulder.

"We'll be aground, ye big, ill-favored loon," he admonished. "Up wi' ye! There's worrk to be did."

Evan found them their clothes and they dressed in silence. By this time, indeed, they could not have heard themselves speak had they shouted. The screams outside were deafening, and on top of this the steamer's whistle was blaring a melancholy lament like the vocal misery of a dying calliope. The door was jammed, and it took them a minute to force it by dint of Jock's immense shoulder. Then they sped through the corridors to the third-class quarters where their men were housed.

On every side groups of frantic passengers and sailors were fighting for possession of the life-boats. McConaughy gritted his teeth as he ran.

"God knows where we'll be!" he grunted to Evan at his elbow. "But there's few o' these poor souls will get anywhere unless we tak' hold."

The men who had served with McCon-

aughy on the *Joan of Arc*, and before that on the *Emmaline Pankhurst*, and before that on the *William and Mary*, were ready and awaiting his commands. A small party of them had sallied forth and seized two of the nearest life-boats and were standing by when he arrived on the scene.

"Good worrk, ma men!" he approved. "Now, get ye for'ard, a brace o' ye, an' round up some o' they women and childerrn that will be jumpin' in the watherr in a minute hence."

In five minutes the two life-boats, loaded to capacity with women and children and four Greek sailors apiece, who had been pried dexterously from a tearing mob that clustered about another overcrowded boat, were lowered from the davits, the first to reach the water.

"I'm thinkin' we'd best be lookin' to the general state o' affairs," remarked McConaughy, when this had been done. "What's our plight, Evan? Can ye see?"

"Noought, put we're agrount, haarrt an' faast. 'Tis saant, not rock, py mercy o' Profidence."

Jock appeared and touched his cap.

"There's a bit fecht aft, sir. Knives oot."

"Murrdher them, if ye need," replied McConaughy tersely. "None o' that. We'll tak' a hand, men."

Jock knocked one knife-fighter insensible, then heaved him into the bottom of a boat. The other was cowed into immediate peacefulness by a brandished fist. Foot by foot, McConaughy drove through the crowded decks, sifting passengers from the crew, sending away the women and children first. Just aft of the bridge he met the Greek captain, beard bristling, hands gesticulating, voice shrill with fright.

"Where are we?" demanded McConaughy.

"W'ere? I should know—how? Affreeka, zat ees all."

"What were ye doin'?"

"I sleep in my cabeen."

"What? Ye slept in your cabin a night like this, when ye knew there was danger behind, and your ship going full speed through a fog?"

The captain shrugged his shoulders.

"I mus' 'ave rest," he suggested. "I am man, not machine."

McConaughy surveyed him with large contempt, started to say something, thought better of it, and regained control.

"Ha' ye done anything to find out where ye are? How do we lie?" he asked.

"W'at ees zat?"

"Ha' ye sent out one of the boats to look for land? Ha' ye lowered the lead? Ha' ye done aught a seaman should do to protect his ship?"

"W'y should I do zat? I prrotec' ze life of my crew an' my passenjairs. I see zat zey get off—zat ees all. W'at more? Zat is enough."

"Enough! Man, ye——"

The Greek scowled at him.

"Plees' you stan' aside. My boat ees rready."

McConaughy looked at the man in astonishment.

"Your—your— Say that again!"

"My boat ees rready," repeated the Greek impatiently. "I go een heem. Plees' you stan' aside."

"Ye'd leave the ship—*your* ship—*now?*"

The Greek nodded and started to walk around McConaughy toward a boat that was preparing to drop from the davits.

The Ulsterman burst into a roar of bull-throated rage.

"Ye—ye fat-bellied little swine! Ye misfit, bunglin' scrapple o' the pit! An' ye call yourself a seaman! God save us! Even the English would reject such as ye. I—I——"

The Greek yelled in terror and tried to dodge, but McConaughy was too quick. He caught the master of the *Giorgi Papastopoulos* by the collar of his uniform jacket and the scruff of his uniform pants and pitched him bodily over the side.

"An' all I wish is that he'd not be picked up," remarked McConaughy, after relieving his anger somewhat by this physical upheaval. "But there's no chance o' that. He'll be lorrdin' it over some miserable women an' childerrn yet—unless I happen to be wi'in hail."

All the boats had now been lowered except two, and the crews of these were waiting at the falls to let them drop. The decks were clear. But McConaughy was not satisfied.

"There may be sick or little ones below," he decided. "Do all o' ye split up by yourselves an' go through her from end to end. Leave not a hole wi'out investigation."

The Greeks at the davit-falls were ordered to stand by, and McConaughy led one detachment of his own men aft, while Jock and Evan took the others to the forecastle.

The idea was that they should work together toward the middle of the ship, combing her holds and cabins thoroughly.

This was a job that required some time, but the wind was dropping with the approach of dawn. The seas had moderated, and for all McConaughy could see, the position of the *Giorgi Papastopoulos* was absolutely safe. She rested easily, at a slight incline, on what seemed to be a sloping sandbar just a few feet under water, her bow several feet higher than her stern.

"Belfast-built," he said to Evan, as they parted. "'Tis cruel harrd to see her go."

"A mercy o' t'e Lord, she'll t'ink," replied Evan. "She'll be well rit o' t'e wreckers."

Below-decks the confusion was indescribable, everything in exactly the position in which it had been thrown by the force of the collision with the sand-bank.

McConaughy worked forward slowly, unwilling to skimp any corner of a ship with which he was not familiar. He sent his men into the darkest holds, and it was half an hour before he reached the starboard gangway running from the second-class quarters to the first-class cabins. Here, as he peered into staterooms, always with an eye for some unfortunate baby, forgotten or discarded in the panic, he was disturbed by a hail from the deck and a pistol-shot. With a bellowed order to the men working with him, he took the main saloon stairs at a bound.

Jock Grant was standing by the rail, pistol trained into the fog, and as McConaughy appeared he fired a second time.

"Are ye mad, Jock?" cried McConaughy. "What are ye doin'?"

"Dod, I missed the hound," returned Jock composedly. "They Greeks wull hae left us, sir."

"Left?"

"Ay, whiles back I came on deck an' the twa o' they boats ye gaed orrderrs tae stand by were i' the water, the men i' baith o' 'em pullin' tae the oars. I shouted an'——"

"What's yon?" interrupted McConaughy.

A gray shape crept toward the starboard quarter through the lightening veil of the mist.

"O-o-ah, you, Engleesh peegs," wailed a voice mockingly. "For zat you 'ave insult' me on my sheep I leave you. Take ze sheep. Be careful of heem. I 'ope ze Moors get you."

A taunting laugh, and the shape vanished before Jock could shoot again.

"Deil's worrk, I see," observed McConaughy. "Well, Jock, go on."

"That wull hae been the Greek captain mon that spoke yon," said Jock. "'Twas he, as I was sayin', gared shout tae the men ye put i' the boats an' bade 'em leave ye. He called oot tae me when I hailed 'em. That wull be a'."

"An' enough," answered McConaughy thoughtfully. "The scoundhrel's gone, beyond question. What was that last he said?"

"Aboot the Muirs?"

"Ay, 'twas that. I'd like fine to know what was his meanin'. I'm free to say, Jock, I ha' but the wildest idea o' our poseetion. They were never over friendly on the bridge, an' I could not get latitude an' longitude as I would ha' liked."

McConaughy scowled.

"An' he mis-ca'ed me English a minute back, too. I'll give him cause to eat they worrds."

Evan strode up, a hunk of waste clutched lovingly in one hand, a daub of grease decorating his face.

"We will pe tesertet, I 'ear," he said.

McConaughy nodded abstractedly.

"Any wather in her for'arrd?" he asked.

"A goot pit in t'e fore-peak, an' I shoult saay some plaates are startet well aft, put she's py no means in whaat I woult caall taanger."

McConaughy nodded again and turned away, tapping the teak railing with his revolver-butt. Jock and Evan exchanged looks. They perceived that an idea was incubating in their skipper's brain.

"We hae much tae be thankfu' for," remarked Jock softly.

Evan, with his quicker wit, chipped in:

"T'e poat is 'onest puilt."

"Ay, that's ma thought," responded McConaughy quickly. "More, Evan, she's Belfast-built—built well, too. Look at yon teak rail; look at her cabin fittings; look at her engines; look at the mold o' her. She's too good a boat to leave on the sands o' Africa."

"Gif we could pull her off, she'd bring a pot o' money!" exclaimed Jock. "Canna ye see the way a salvage court wad jump at the chance tae draw the siller frae they Greeks?"

"'Twould be plain sailin', in a manner o'

speakin', once we got her free o' this," agreed McConaughy. "I'm even thinkin' the assessorrs would allow us a bit exthra by reason o' the bare-faced deserrtion o' her own company. But we ha' yet to get her off."

"An' t'ere is people yon would prefent ye," interjected Evan, pointing through the rising mist.

McConaughy stepped forward in time to see a shadow flit by the stranded hulk of the liner, a shadow which he instantly identified as a good-sized felucca, probably crammed with men.

"Hecht, ye're right, Evan," he said. "I ha' no knowledge o' this coast, but 'tis safe assumin' 'tis a bad one—more especially at this time, what wi' fightin' all over Europe an' gov'ments too busy to watch the heathen. How are the boilers? Ha' ye steam?"

"Fair pressure."

"Set your men to it. Build up the fires. Give her all that will be safe."

"Ay, sir," and Evan disappeared.

"Jock, take your men an' rig the fire-hose for connection wi' the boilerrs."

A broad smile overspread Mr. Grant's face.

"Ay, sir," he responded.

III

EASTWARD the sun creased a somber trail through the clinging mist. Seaward stretched boundless waters, broken at frequent intervals by oily patches proclaiming shoals. McConaughy from the bridge surveyed his surroundings with an expert eye. Only by the favor of fortune, he apprehended, could the *Giorgi Papastopoulos* have navigated blindly her way past so many sand-bars. But the very multitude of the obstructions was a source of safety, for the vessel lay behind what amounted to a series of breakwaters.

"So farr, so good," McConaughy muttered to himself.

He turned his face shoreward, where the increasing radiance of the sun was tearing to shreds the veil that shut the vessel in.

"A-a-ah!" he exclaimed, as the first rift opened.

A mile or so away a sandy beach, backed by sand-dunes, filled the perspective. It boiled with white-robed figures, clustered about several feluccas and smaller craft drawn up at the water's edge.

"Mr. Grant! Mr. Apgar!" called McConaughy.

The word was passed along, and they scrambled up the bridge-ladder.

"Ha' ye got steam up?" he addressed Apgar.

"She's comin' nicely," responded the chief, now gloriously sweaty and filthy in professional dungarees.

"Jock, d'ye see yon?"

Jock nodded.

"Call all hands for'arrd. I ha' somewhat to say to 'em."

McConaughy's men, so lately transferred from the status of passengers to their normal life as working mariners, gathered eagerly in front of the bridge. The fog was breaking up rapidly and they could see the meance on the beach as well as their officers.

"Ma men," said McConaughy, "we ha' been in many a narrow hole togetherr, but I ne'er failed to push ye out, did I?"

"No, sir."

There was confidence in that booming reply.

"I tak' pleasure in your answerr," McConaughy continued. "More by rreason because we'll soon be in another tight hole, if ma eyes are good as they used to be. I want ye to do as ye're told; keep undherr coverr, and thrust in me again. The few arrms we ha' will be no use against yon devils. We'll give 'em steam.

"But firrst, we'll ha' a bit prayerr, for it's more than likely we'll ha' need o' all the aid Providence can spare us these next few hourrs."

McConaughy uncovered himself, and all his crew did likewise. Then he stood forward in the center of the bridge, and his deep, bull voice growled an octave lower:

"Lorrd, we are thy serrvants, humble seafarrin' men, wi' no mannerr o' thraffic wi' idolatorrs. We ha' deserrved little enough from ye, but we ask protection from the dangers 'rround about us, especially, Lorrd, from the heathen over yon that threaten us wi' sharrp knives an' rifles—an' we hope, Lorrd, their ammuneetion is defective, an' may the gun-runnerrs that brought it in be currsed. We will ha' a big fight for it, Lordd, so we pray ye make the steam hot an' their arrms unsteady.

"An' Lorrd, if it is not presumin' beyond measure, we ask that some manner o' vengeance be brought down on that Greek masther o' this ship that left us here, hopin' we

might perrish. We want no harrm to come to his passengers and the poor innocent loons o' his crew; but we pray that he be made to suffer all the evil that ought to come to a masther that deserrts his ship."

McConaughy paused and turned matter-of-factly to Evan.

"Will that be all?" he asked. "Ha' I coverred the ground, Evan?"

"Prafely, sir," responded Evan with enthusiasm.

McConaughy resumed:

"An' because o' all this we ask help from ye, Lorrd. If we didna deserrve it, we wouldna ask it. Amen."

"Amen," growled the chorus in answer.

There was a rustle as heads were covered.

"We'll ha' breakfastt, now," announced McConaughy calmly.

Evan stepped up to him, black eyes glowing through a mask of grease and soot.

"It would pe well to sing a hymn," he suggested. "T'ere's no haarm, whateffer."

"A good thought," McConaughy assented.

This time he stepped back, and Evan took his place, the wild passion of some old bardic strain gripping the Welshman's spirit as it always did when the fervor of religion swept over him. It was a simple hymn they sang, trite, cloying, childish; but the roar of their voices carried clear across the water to the beach where the white-robed figures ceased their restless movements to listen to this war-song of the mad Kaffirs, whom Allah had delivered into their hands.

There is a happy land, far, far away;
Where saints in glory stand, bright, bright as day.

BREAKFAST over, McConaughy made a hasty tour of inspection to see that no lower-deck ports were open, no ropes or other means of escalade left trailing from the vessel's iron sides. Fore and aft, on either beam, the fire-hose lines were stretched, nozzles ready with patent holders adjusted, so that men could handle them after the switching coils were filled to bursting with deadly steam. A twist with a spanner, and the boilers could be turned into them.

The sun was now beating down mercilessly. As far as the eye could see there was nothing save wastes of water and wastes of sand, rolling waves and rolling dunes. Inland a few scattering palm-trees broke the monotony at intervals. Several of the boats drawn up on the shore were run out through the low surf to an accompaniment of yells and tom-toms. McConaughy, serene on his bridge, observed the preparations of the Moors with a calculating eye. But he ducked for cover when the leading boat abruptly let off a fusillade that rattled all about him, ripping the bridge-screens to tatters.

"Hecht!" he muttered, as he crawled down the offside ladder. "They'll no' be very carefu' o' their ammuneetion. High-powerr guns, too, or I'm an Irisherr."

As if in corroboration of his judgment, the Moors fired another volley, which whistled along the decks of the *Giorgi Papastopoulos* and broke a few porthole deadlights. The Children of the Desert had been supplied recently with an assortment of Mannlichers from the Trieste arsenal, accompanied by more ammunition than the oldest sheikh had seen in his whole life; and they were as delighted as children with an opportunity to turn their new toys to practical use.

"Are these men enemies?" had asked the more cautious graybeards, when the *Giorgi Papastopoulos* was discovered.

"Enemies?" replied a young sheikh. "Did not the Kaffir that brought us these guns from the sea say that all who came on the surface of the waters would be foes?"

There was a nodding of turbans in front of the camel's-hair tents pitched behind the dunes.

"Ay, these men be of those Kaffirs who can not fight or work miracles, as the Kaffir told us," said another. "For, look, they come on the surface of the waters, even as we do, while the Kaffir who brought the guns, he came underneath, where naught but fishes or djinns may live."

"There be much booty in a great ship such as this," asserted another, licking his lips.

"Our tribe shall be rich for generations," declared a third.

So they attacked.

Boat after boat put off from the shore. The Kaffirs who came under the sea had been most generous with their rifles. Even the striplings of fifteen and sixteen had been equipped. And the boats were crowded.

McConaughy took note of all this from behind a pair of curtains at one of the portholes in the main saloon. He had cleared the decks of his men, and the hose-nozzles

were trained from strategic shelters in companionways and odd corners, barricaded hastily with whatever furniture or impedimenta could be rooted up for the purpose.

"Ye'll no' do yourselves any good if ye're killed," McConaughy gave parting warning. "Look to it. Not a head do ye show till I give the worrd."

The Moors lay to a few cable-lengths from the steamer and bombarded her vociferously. Every time a porthole flew to pieces they screamed with delight. Once, when a shot nipped the whistle and it emitted a throaty murmur, they turned tail and all but fled.

At last they ceased firing and the boats drew together in a cluster. It was plain that the Children of the Desert did not altogether like the dead silence and lifelessness of this strange vessel.

But the leaders orated vigorously, and when confidence had been restored their flotilla broke up into two sections, one making for the port quarter aft and the other for the starboard quarter forward. As they drew near, the attackers opened fire again, the tom-toms clamored and every lusty voice was raised in the most blood-curdling screams of approved desert warfare.

McConaughy's only answer—that is, Apgar's—was a raucous blast on the whistle which brought them up standing. Another check, and once more the leaders harangued, whilst mullahs described the glories of paradise,the exquisite tortures to which the Kaffirs could be subjected and the vast treasures awaiting bold spirits.

Greed and lust triumphed over superstition. Chattering and howling, the Moors closed in. The mast of each boat crawled with men; the shrouds were thick with them; crude ladders were poised ready on the half-decks of the larger feluccas. There was an end of firing, for the Moors could see nothing to shoot at and the breaking of deadlights had ceased to divert them. They were after blood.

Knives clinched between their teeth, the leading ruffians swarmed up the sides and over the rail onto the deserted decks. McConaughy, from his curtained port-hole, let them come on,

"The more o' ye, the betther, so farr as I'm concerrned," he growled. "Ay, ye dirrty thieves. Ye'll be clean, some o' ye, before ye're through wi' the bath I'll give ye."

The Moors on deck were too busy helping up the files behind them to pay any attention to their surroundings. They took it for granted that the Kaffirs on board had fled and that they had only to seek out the hiding-places of their enemies and enjoy the sport of killing in thoroughly artistic desert fashion.

Man after man, they came, until McConaughy rubbed his eyes in amazement. He had forgotten that prehensile bare toes can easily climb the iron hull of a steamer, provided a rope is at hand to brace one's self against.

But he did not move until the decks were full and the first confident scouts of the boarding parties started out in search of loot. Then he raised to his lips the boatswain's whistle he had borrowed and blew a single shrill blast.

Ss-ss-ssss-sss-sssss!

The boldest of the attackers hesitated at this strange sound which was like the threatening hiss of a giant serpent. Imagine their surprise, when from blind doorways projected long, viciously gleaming heads that jerked and trembled and suddenly emitted scalding jets of white vapor which burned and shriveled all flesh with which it came in contact.

The war-cries and jests gave way to howls and yelps of pain. A few of the leaders attempted a rush, but it was impossible to see to aim through the steam-clouds, and the onslaught of this mysterious enemy was merciless and certain.

Crazed and desperate, those sufferers who were able to move ran to the sides and leaped overboard. Such as had escaped followed suit. Nobody thought of the ropes that had been hung or the ladders or the raking masts of the feluccas. The one ambition of all concerned was to escape as quickly as possible from the dreadful menace of the white death. The huddled bodies that lay silent about the decks were urge enough, let alone the continued streams from the nozzles.

But McConaughy was not content with this punishment. He wanted to be at peace so long as the *Giorgi Papastopoulos* clung to the sands, and he ordered his hosemen out to the rail, whence they could direct their jets down upon the crowded waists of the enemy craft.

Few of the Moors thought to fire their rifles, and the few that did never attempted

to aim. Every man who could stagger on his feet strove to do the one thing—to escape from the inhuman enemies who had given his friends and brethren an end far more terrible than the brains of the desert could devise.

McConaughy parboiled them as long as they were within reach of his nozzles, then ordered his men back under cover, and when the weary Moors lay to after their first desperate push back for the shore, all that they saw was the same perspective of lifeless decks, only this time dotted with white-garbed heaps and little curlicues of vapor, under the glare of the sun. Not a man moved within the range of their vision. The *Giorgi Papastopoulos* looked a ship of the dead.

"He lied, the Kaffir who came from the sea, he lied!" moaned the sufferers. "These Kaffirs have a magic stronger than any he knew. They kill without revealing themselves. Allah! Take pity on Thy slaves!"

McConaughy surveyed the scene with a competent eye.

"That will be suffeecient for 'em," he announced. "Lay off, you hosemen. Jock, send a messengerr to Evan wi' orrdherrs he may turrn off his steam."

"Rricht, sir," assented Jock. "Puir de'ils," he added, with an eye at the figures that cluttered the decks.

"They would ha' puir-de'iled ye wi' half a chance," returned McConaughy. "Ye innerrcent, would ye fondle wildcats?"

"Nae, nae, skipperr, but——"

"Now, I wondherr are their ammuneetion-pounches full?" continued McConaughy abstractedly. "'Twas uncommon ceevil o' the scoundhrrels to bring their rifles wi' 'em. Even wi' the steam, I'll feel more comforrtable arrmed."

"They'll nae come their ways here again," said Jock, returning from a personal tour of inspection through the saloon windows. "There wull be nigh thurrty lyin' ootside."

But McConaughy already had forgotten the fight. Past history was past history to him. He wrestled with the present, and when the present gave him an opportunity he speculated on the future.

"Jock," he said abruptly, "ha' ye ever salvaged a ship?"

Jock shook his head.

"Forbye ye ca' a bit tow i' the high seas a salvage," he amended.

"Ye'll ha' experience aplenty, before the week's out," rejoined McConaughy. "Wi' the morrn we'll fa' to. They Greek loons ha' put money in our pockets, Jock."

IV

McCONAUGHY'S policy of frightfulness met with the results he had anticipated. The *Giorgi Papastopoulos* remained an object of awed wonder to the Moors. From their sandhills, the Children of the Desert viewed the bustle on her decks without any desire to sample again at close-range the efficacious magic of the Kaffirs who held such huge serpents in leash. At night they sometimes mustered up enough courage to fire an occasional shot in her general direction, but you could not have hired the entire tribe to approach her.

Still, McConaughy took no chances, and several members of the crew, armed with captured rifles, stood guard when he mustered his men early on the morning after the repulse of the attack.

"I ha' somewhat addeetional o' imporrtance to say to ye, ma men," he advised them. "We ha' prayed, ye'll ken, an' so far as we know, our prayerrs ha' been answerred. I ha' suffeecient confidence in Providence to believe they Greek loons will receive the rretrribution the Lorrd will ha' awarrded to 'em. But we ha' it in our powerr to tak' a vengeance a damn sight more satisfactorry to ye than a' the heavenly vengeance a Christian can call down. We can hit they Greeks in the pocket. D'ye see? Here we ha' a fine, well-built, heavily-laden express ship—a liner. I ha' been over her wi' ma officerrs an' I do not hesitate to tell ye, she will assess in the admiralty courts for six hun'erd thousand pounds."

There was a restless stir among the crew as the figures sank home.

"Here she is," McConaughy continued. "She's deserrted—criminally deserrted. We were payin' passengerrs, entitled to all due considerration, an' instead o' that her mastherr an' his men deserrt her an' leave us on boarrd. Now, ma men, ye know what a British Admirralty Courrt will say to that. It's one o' the few good things we can say o' the English that they'll never miss a chance to manhandle another nation's merrchant marine. The Greeks are no' popular in this war. If we get her off—an' I'd think little enough o' the lot o' ye, an' maself included, if we could not—we stand to tak' in all o'

three hun'erd thousand pounds. It may be more. I'm not pretendin' to be a sea-lawyer, but we ha' prrotected this ship in the firrst place, an' if we save her our claims against her can be as high as we choose. D'ye follow me?"

A murmur of assent answered him.

"'Twill be harrd worrk," McConaughy warned them. "An' we can ha' no slackness. We must get off before rough weather springs up or before they Moors stir up their courrage again. Are ye for it? It may mean thousands o' pounds to every one o' ye."

This time there was a deep-throated, rumbling cheer.

"Good!" exclaimed McConaughy. "Now we will be fallin' to worrk. Mr. Apgar an' his arrtificerrs will pay special attention to the plates that ha' been starrted for'arrd; the balance o' the 'black gang' will put the engines in shape. Mr. Grant will tak' charrge o' the deck worrk and the shiftin' o' the carrgo. There's worrk for all. Remember, she's Belfast-built. She was a good ship before they hell-hounds got hold o' her—an' we'll make her as sweet a craft as she was the day she dropped down the Lough. Smarrtly, ma men!"

And smartly they responded to him. Evan and his skilled mechanics found welding tools, rivets and spare plates, descended into the fore-peak, and in water up to their waists labored mightily with the leaks which had been started by the force of the impact with the sand-bar.

In the meantime, Jock and his husky deck gang were shifting the cargo as far aft as possible so as to lessen the weight with which she clung to the bar. This was a tedious job, a job which required days, for McConaughy had his own ideas on the subject, and he wished the cargo to be distributed so that it would do the most good when he came to put into effect the plan that he was debating in his brain.

Of course, it was impossible for Evan to make good all the damage wrought by a collision with a continent; the ship needed dry-docking for that. But at least he was able to repair the more serious breaks and to brace the weakened deck-beams and structure of the stem. By actual trial with the pumps it was determined that the water could be kept down to a safe level in the fore-peak, and that was as much as could be asked in the circumstances.

"It will not pe whaat I caall a graant jop," he reported to McConaughy, "put I hafe seen worrse worrk in harpor."

"Is she good for Gib?"

"Ye caan taak' her 'ome, if ye waant to," retorted Evan. "All she peets is gentle hantling."

"We'll see," was all McConaughy answered.

He walked back to the after holds, where Jock was sorting and rearranging cargo. An appreciable difference had been caused in the way the vessel lay. She was no longer down so deeply by the head. Instead, her stem rode fairly high on the sand-bank, whilst her stern had sunk deeper in the water.

Jock tossed away a fountain of sweat from his brow with a single dash of his hand.

"We're no verra speedy wi' the worrk i' hand, sir," he apologized.

"Ye ha' made progress, Jock."

"Oh, ay. Progress, nae doot. But 'tis slow worrk."

"Ye sing a song the like o' Evan's," remarked McConaughy dryly.

"We can na mak' a ship out o' a derelict in seven days, man. 'Twould be a fair sacrilege." He glanced around him. "Can ye mak' me a raft?"

"A what?"

"A raft, Jock."

"Ay. How big wad ye hae it be, skipperr?"

"A good big raft, Jock, big enough to supporrt an anchorr."

Jock pondered.

"It can be done," he said at last. "We hae nae materrials tae hand, but that is a matterr will be clearred up, one way or anotherr."

"That's the spirrit, Jock," approved McConaughy. "Tak' what ye need—anything to the cabin fittings. We must ha' the raft."

It was not necessary for Jock to strip the cabin fittings, but he took practically every other bit of timber and every empty hogshead on the *Giorgi Papastopoulos* for his purpose. He assembled these things in the shallow water by the bow, and here, with the help of Evan, he constructed a ponderous, loosely built raft which yet was capable of supporting an enormous weight. To it, by means of the for'ard donkey-engine and winch, was lowered the huge port anchor.

Then the raft was towed around to the stern of the stranded liner, a steel-wire cable was moved outboard to the anchor, and the raft dropped astern with its burden to deposit it in deep water several hundred yards away in the channel. Followed a repetition of this performance, and presently a second anchor, likewise rove to a wire hawser, was dropped beside the first.

This was two weeks after the fight with the Moors and McConaughy decreed a rest for his weary crew. They lolled about the decks, panting and tired, but quite happy. Their work was progressing, and they were men who took great pride in their work. The *Giorgi Papastopoulos* shone with new paint. The rust-scale had been flaked off her engines and furnaces, which glistened with oil. The cargo had been shifted far aft, so that now her hull teetered on the brink of the sand-bar at high tide, poised as if ready to slide off. The steel hawsers connected with the anchors outboard over the stern were hitched to the aft donkey-engine. All was ready for McConaughy's plan.

"To-morrer," he was saying to Evan, "we'll thry out the powerr o' your engines an'——"

"Hoot, skipperr," came a hail from Jock Grant. "Smoke i' the norr'west!"

McCONAUGHY snatched up his glasses. Even with the naked eye he could see the low-lying smudge against the horizon-line that had caught Jock's attention. The binoculars showed, in addition, a lean dark hull that was racing along at tremendous speed.

"Hecht!" he growled. "A desthroyerr! Evan, this is no' a bit o' luck for us, if she's some meddlesome, interrferrin' Englishman, wi' smarrt Aleck officers wishfu' to pull us off an' stow some coin in their own pockets."

Evan cursed with a vigor and picturesqueness hardly compatible with his religious views. Jock, who joined them at once, was inclined to be gloomy.

"'Twas too much to expect," he said. "Forbye, I could feel the siller i' ma pocket."

They stood and watched as the destroyer approached. Several miles offshore, she lay to and dropped a small motor-boat which easily navigated the shallows, as it was high tide. McConaughy trained his glasses on this craft and started in surprise.

"They'll ne'er be English," he cried.

"Who, then?" asked Jock.

"Here, look for yourself."

Jock's eagle eyes studied the motor-boat carefully, then lifted to the distant hull of the destroyer.

"She's nae English," he pronounced. "Eye-talian, maybe——"

"She's Greek," asserted Evan.

McConaughy snatched the glasses again and leveled them.

"I think ye ha' the right o' it, Evan," he said finally. "They're no English an'—ah!"

As if in answer to their uncertainty, the destroyer broke from her stern the Greek naval ensign.

"That wull be worrse norr everr," commented Jock heavily. "Greek! Much guid we did wi' our prayerrs!"

"T'e cowarts from this ship must ha' peen picked up," said Evan.

"Ye bethray remarrkable intelligence, Evan," said McConaughy scornfully. "If——"

The motor-boat ranged alongside and an officer stood up in her stern, surprise written broad on his face. He addressed them in Greek, and when McConaughy answered in English his surprise became greater.

"W'at you do on thees sheep?" he demanded.

"We're passengerrs abandoned on her by her mastherr," returned McConaughy.

"But—but there is nobody on thees sheep—he have say there is nobody on thees sheep!"

"He said what was a lie, then. He abandoned us on her."

"Who are you?"

"We are British subjects."

"Oh!"

The officer turned and jabbered to a junior who sat beside him.

"Are there of Moors a presence in this vicinity?" he next asked elaborately.

"Lots o' 'em," answered McConaughy. "They shoot at us all the time."

The officer ducked quickly and cast a wary eye toward the shore.

"But they have not take thees sheep?" he said wonderingly.

"So 'twould seem."

The officer considered.

"It ees all w'at you call strange," he declared. "But now we pull you off, eh? That is right?"

"I suppose so."

McConaughy's heart was heavy.

"Firrst," continued the Greek, "we mus'

breeng our sheep in close to you. There ees channel?"

An idea of dazzling boldness and simplicity flashed into McConaughy's brain. Instinctively, his eye swept the intervening flats and shoals, now decently covered by the flowing tide.

"Good channel," he replied. "Ye come straight in from where ye are now. There's a short turn to the west—" he pointed to an oily patch of water that indicated a mud-bank any landlubber might have spotted—"and after that ye come rright on, bearrin' a thrrifle east o' south."

The officer nodded.

"I go do heem," he promised. "You make ready zee cables."

McConaughy watched the little boat sputter away, then turned to his officers with a look of hope in his eyes.

"Its no' what I'd call good morrality, in the general sense," he said. "But when ye rememberr that they scoundhrrels got safe away from here aftherr leavin' us to be butcherred by the Moors, I'm no friendly to Greeks o' any sorrt."

Jock was observing the destroyer with a calculating eye.

"Barrow-on-Furrness," he observed. "She's new, two hun'erd thousand pun, skipper, or I ne'er kenned a 32-knot turrbine."

Only Evan shivered and looked at them askance.

"Why, what's wrong wi' ye, man?" asked McConaughy.

"T'e engines o' her," said Evan sorrowfully. "Fair worrks o' aarrt—high-powerr turrpines! Oh, sir, think o' t'e hafoc 'twill mak' wi' all t'e peauty o' her insites!"

"I'm thinkin' o' the siller in ma pocket," said Jock, complacently.

McConaughy frowned.

"Say no more, Evan, say no more," he ordered. "Isna there a dhry-dock left for her to go to? Ye shall tow her there, yourself."

Evan said nothing, only watched the destroyer as she reshipped the motor-boat and picked up headway, coming on rapidly, with a bone in her teeth.

"Not efen an Englishman woult steam like that, wi' an unknown coast in the front o' him," he said at last.

She turned the first shoal, straightened her course and again increased her speed.

"Seventeen knots, or I'm a Dutchman!" McConaughy exclaimed. "'Tis showin' off, no less!"

At that moment the raking hull of the destroyer heaved up into the air, wrenched sideways and came down in a smother of muddy foam. One of her big funnels toppled over and smoke belched across her decks.

Evan sank down and refused to look at what followed.

"T'ere will not pe a fane left in her turrpines," he moaned. "Oh, I caan see t'e wreck o' her! What a shaame!"

McConaughy was examining the wreck critically through his glasses.

"Her bow will be pretty well smashed up," he said. "Evan man, be sensible. Can they get her off?"

"Get her off! Wi'out power, she's helpless."

McConaughy winked at his first officer.

"Jock," he said, "was it two hun'erd thousand ye put her at?"

"Ay, sir."

"We'll ha' to add a few figures to that check, then. Cheer up, Evan. Ye ha' more worrk to do, now, than any o' us. Hecht, we still ha' our luck wi' us, aftherr all!"

V

"LOSH, but the mon's greetin'!" exclaimed Jock in disgust.

It was true. The captain of his Hellenic Majesty's destroyer *Archimedes* was ascending the precarious ladder lowered over the side of the *Giorgi Papastopoulos* for his reception, with tears coursing down his cheeks.

"The fool!" rasped McConaughy. "Is he a woman?"

"He'll hae bonnie whiskerrs," volunteered Jock seriously.

"T'e man weeps for his ship," spoke up Evan. "Think shaame o' yourselfes, t'e pair o' ye, that ye make a mock o' him. How woult ye feel in his plaace?"

"Ay, Evan," said McConaughy soothingly. "I ken how ye feel, an' I'll lend ye to the Greeks for repairrin' the damage."

Evan muttered and turned away. It still seemed criminal to him to have wrecked the destroyer's turbines. It was not a question of conflicting interests with him; he paid no heed to the motives back of McConaughy's actions. He was thinking solely of those beautiful engines, with their

thousands of intricate vanes whirring in intimately dove-tailed fashion, each where it belonged, suddenly torn to pieces and hurled into utter chaos. It shocked his engineer's heart. To him it was mechanical blasphemy.

The commander of the destroyer, followed by the officer who spoke English, came over the side and approached McConaughy, wringing his hands.

"I can underrstan' naught o' what he says," McConaughy interrupted, after a flood of aspirated Greek had been poured into his ears, addressing himself to the English-speaking officer. "Do ye tell me what he wants."

"He say it was mos' unfortunate you tell heem to make hees sheep go zat way," explained the bi-lingual gentleman.

McConaughy shrugged his shoulders.

"It was most unforrtunate—for him."

"Thees is mos' difficult coast," continued the Greek.

"Ye say well. It is. Here are two o' us piled up on its sands."

This idea appeared to strike the Greeks as remarkable and they jabbered over it for several minutes.

"He say what you goin' do now?" stated the interpreter next.

"I'm meanin' to pull off ma ship," returned McConaughy.

"He say he theenk he send wireless message for help."

McConaughy instantly galvanized into action. This would interfere materially with his plans.

"If he does, it will bring the Austhrian submarrines down around us like flies," he objected. "They'd jump at the chance o' sinkin' a Greek war-ship—an' then afterwarrd tell your King that they thought ye was English."

The Greek shuddered. Plainly, the thought was not at all to his liking.

"But what ees there else to do?" he asked. "My captain he say hees engines are all gone—w'at you say? Oh, smash, bust! Hees bow is broke in."

"I could pull ye off," said McConaughy tentatively.

The Greeks threw up their hands in amazement.

"But you are stuck on ze bottom yourself," objected the interpreter.

"Yes, but I'll be off in a day or two."

"How ees zat?"

McConaughy conducted them aft, and explained his plan in simple words. They were in ecstasies over his genius.

"My captain, he say w'at a marvelous seamansheep," cried the interpreter. "It ees most' wonderful! Sare, we bow before you!"

McConaughy relented somewhat at this hero-worship, which he also accepted as an indication that his victims were not entirely devoid of knowledge and appreciation of their profession.

"I might send over ma chief engineerr," he suggested. "He's a man o' parrts. It's possible he could fix up your bow for ye."

"Zat would be mos' kind. Sare, we accep' wiz pleasure."

Here Jock interrupted.

"It wad nae be harrmfu' tae draw up a line or twa o' agreement," he suggested quietly. "If it comes tae the coorts, there's naught more highly considered than a contract."

"Ye're right," McConaughy agreed.

He turned to the Greeks.

"Ye'll ha' no objection to present a request for assistance to me, all forrmal an' prroperr? 'Twill mak' mattherrs more regularr."

This was considered by the officers and finally accepted. So the party adjourned to the chart-house, where the document was drawn up in what Jock deemed regular form.

"The worrds are nae verra legal i' their twists," he said modestly, after their guests had departed, with much hand-shaking and protestation of obligation; "but she'll hold i' any coort i' the worrld where they mak' pretense o' justice."

"Ye ha' not done much, then," returned McConaughy. "Are ye that innerrcent, Jock, ye do not ken there 's no such courrt anywhere?"

Jock looked aggrieved, and being aggrieved retired precipitately.

"At the lang last, its bein' common sense, juist that an' nae more," was his parting shot. "I'm makin' no grrand claims. Only wait 'till the lawyers hae their say. Ye'll ken ma wisdom."

"Doubtless, Jock, doubtless."

And McConaughy forgot about it in the exigencies of the double task that now confronted him.

Evan, with several skilled mechanics, was sent over to the destroyer to patch up her

bow—the engines were hopeless, he saw at a glance. It had been precisely as he had feared. Hundreds of vanes were torn from their places. It would require weeks, if not months, of expert dock-yard work to put the turbines in running order again.

The moving of the *Giorgi Papastopoulos* went on in the meantime. It was something that could not be done hastily. At the full of the tide the engines were reversed, the screws biting deep in the water, and the donkey-engine started hauling on the steel cables made fast to the anchors.

Slowly, a foot at a time, the liner slid back toward her element. It was a fight by inches, really, for McConaughy feared to put too much pressure on his donkey-engine, lest the cables part or the anchor give. Only by nicely adjusting the relative strain on the propelling machinery and the kedging apparatus was it possible to achieve success.

Three-quarters of an hour's work satisfied him the first day. Then he knocked off to inspect the cables, the position of the anchors and the ground gained. It was fairly satisfactory. The anchors had dragged a little at first, but this had served to bury them deeper in the mud-bottom of the channel. The cables were whole and sound. An examination of the bow showed that the vessel had been pulled about ten feet off the sand-bank.

The next day an onshore wind piled the seas against the beach and rendered futile any effort to kedge successfully. So passed the third day. On the fourth, however, the wind had died down, and McConaughy renewed operations. This time, he was resolved to put his scheme to the touch, once and for all: to haul off within the twenty-four hours.

The fight lasted for nearly three hours. Sometimes by a whole foot, sometimes by an inch or two, the steamer threshed off the sand-bar that had fastened on her. Progress was mortally slow, but absolutely sure. And after a certain period had passed, the rate of gain increased materially.

At eleven o'clock in the morning, there was a sucking pull on the bow, a violent jar throughout the hull, and in a trice she had come off, floating free and unencumbered. Very carefully, then, they backed her out into the channel and moored her by the cables attached to the sunken anchors.

The salvaging of the destroyer was a simple matter compared to what had gone before. A steel cable rove to her forecastle, a strong steady pull by the liner's rejuvenated engines, and the warship was released. Her bow was crumpled worse than the *Giorgi Papastopoulos's*, and she made water badly, but luckily her forward collision bulkhead was able to stand the strain.

"She's all rright for six or seven knots," was McConaughy's judgment after a painstaking survey. "But we'll ne'er mak' Gib. 'Twill be Malta this voyage."

IT WAS several days later that the picket-boats off Valetta sighted the peculiar procession coming in—first, the battered liner; next the still more battered destroyer, her bow a mess of timbers and emergency tarpaulin screens.

"Wot the blazes do yer call yerself?" hailed a warrant officer.

"Derelict towing a salvaged Greek desthroyer," replied McConaughy.

"Where yer from?"

"No porrt."

"Wot?"

Much profanity accompanied this ejaculation, together with an emphatic statement that "blankety-blank-blank seaswipes o' the merchant service would get their blankey-blank-blank-blank heads blowed off if they tried to get funny with the Royal Navy, yer blankety-blank-blank," etc., ad lib.

McConaughy leaned over his bridge-railing, with a quiet smile.

"Man, man," he expostulated, "I'd fearr to ha' the cerrtainty o' the pit starin' me in the face, if I were in yourr boots! Ha' ye no comprehension o' the sinfu'ness o' futile currsin'?"

"I asked ye a civil question," rejoined the picket-boat.

"An' I'll give ye a civil answerr, ma man. We ha' been plucked by the merrcy o' Providence from the manifold dangerrs o' the sea."

The picket-boat sheered off.

"Blankety - blank - blank - blank - blank - blank," she apostrophized the air about her. "Wot do yer think yer are? A bloomin' Sunday-school excursion?"

As if in answer to this aimless taunt, the sea-breeze brought to the picket-boat's crew the bass roar of a hymn:

There is a happy land, far, far away;
Where saints in glory stand, bright, bright as day.
There we shall happy be
When from sin and sorrow free,
Lord, we shall live with thee
Blest, blest, for aye!

"Blow me bloody dead-lights out!" gasped the picket-boat. "A bloody chapel-boat, that's wot she is!"

In fact, Valetta was frankly puzzled by the *Giorgi Papastopoulos* and her company. The English naval officers were quick to appreciate the feat McConaughy had accomplished, but he received their advances with frigid dislike. The Greek consul wept in despair at the plight of his nationals and their property. The officers of the *Archimedes*, after their vessel was safe in harbor, joined forces with their consul in a frantic effort to escape legal obligation for the aid they had accepted.

The English port authorities were rebuffed by McConaughy, but secretly glad to see the Greeks embarrassed. As for McConaughy, he cabled Miss McNish, managing director of the Red Funnel line, to send him the best solicitor in admiralty law that money could hire.

For McConaughy, he was prodigal of words in that cable:

Vessels involved should appraise 800,000 pounds. Suggest it is stake well worth Line's efforts.

Miss McNish cabled back:

Sending Britney, of McIntyre, Heathcote, Dunton and Britney, of Liverpool. He will advise. Nonsense to speak of Line's interest in matter. Will lend all aid, but reward will go to you and crew.

"Verra decent o' the lassie," observed Jock, when McConaughy showed him this reply. "She wad hae no ground for claim in any case, though. We didna use her property."

"Ye close-fisted Scotsman," roared McConaughy. "What o' that? Isna she a friend to us? I'd give her all ma share an' welcome, if she'd tak' it."

"Nae doot, nae doot," said Jock cautiously. "But there's nae ca' tae be reckless wi' siller."

"T'e money is not in our pockets yet," remarked Evan caustically. "It's petter ye shoult not talk so larrge."

Indeed, eventually they all came around to Evan's way of thinking. Mr. Britney came to Malta, went through the usual legal preliminaries of libeling the salvaged vessels, expressed the utmost confidence in the case, and returned to England with McConaughy and his crew, where they gave testimony before Lord Gurney, Justice of the Court of King's Bench, sitting as a Judge in Admiralty, at London.

But long months elapsed after this. The *Archimedes* was repaired and released under an agreement with the Greek Government; the *Giorgi Papastopoulos* likewise was in service again, her owners having furnished bond.

Jock had begun to be much worried about their case and was prone to pessimistic discourses on their folly in having ever let the *Giorgi Papastopoulos* out of their hands.

"Wi' the desthroyerr it may be we wadna hae been entituled tae retain her," he was saying to Evan one day, "but the——"

He was interrupted by the arrival of McConaughy with an open letter in his hand.

"Well, men, we ha' won," said McConaughy calmly.

Evan said nothing, but Jock leaped up.

"How much wull it be?" he demanded.

McConaughy held out the letter to him.

"Thrree hun'errd an' ten thousand pounds."

"Dod," said Jock tremblingly.

Evan breathed—

"Saant Taavit!"

After a time Jock mustered up courage to read the letter, a long document, replete with legal phrases that meant nothing to them, including quotations from Lord Gurney's opinion.

"Ha' done, ha' done," adjured McConaughy impatiently. "'Tis mattherr that I cannot undherrstand an' doubt ye can, either. Is there nought wi' sense to it?"

Jock emitted a sudden volcanic chuckle.

"Ay there is that," he said. "Skipperr, d'ye mind the time ye twitted me for ma law worrds i' the contract we drew up wi' the Greek orf'cer? Harrk to this, now:

Touching the claim for salvage from the owners of the *Giorgi Papastopoulos*, there can be no question in law or in fact. The evidence is most clear upon this point. The vessel was a total loss, abandoned upon an unknown, hostile coast, where her looting and eventual destruction was a certain eventuality if she was not protected. Moreover, the claimants were abandoned upon this vessel by her master under conditions of most distressing and revolting cruelty. Notwithstanding this, they guarded her from attack, repaired her damages and by the

exercise of commendable ingenuity and determination were able to float her by their own unaided efforts.

In such a case, legal custom has established the assessment of salvage to the maximum amount. The vessel was in the way to becoming a total loss to her owners. They were fortunate to save anything from the disaster. In the circumstances it does not seem unreasonable to place salvage at an amount one-half the total estimated value of the ship, her mails and cargo, or three hundred thousand pounds.

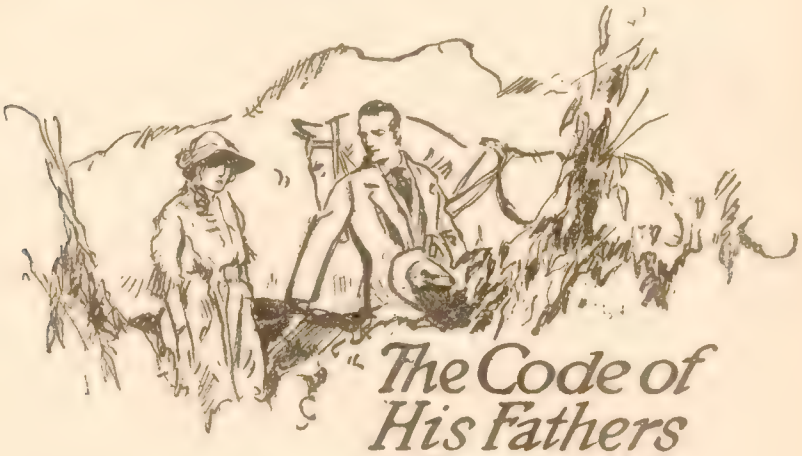
The claim against his Hellenic Majesty's destroyer *Archimedes* would not rest upon equally indisputable grounds if it were not for one saving fact. It must be remembered that the officers of the destroyer have presented evidence to show that when their vessel came ashore the *Giorgi Papastopoulos* was still in a similar plight, the coast was occupied by hostile Moors, and while the claimants had succeeded in repelling one attack by their own efforts, it is not certain that they could have been equally successful in meeting a second attack.

The officers of the *Archimedes* point out that their guns covered the *Giorgi Papastopoulos* and furnished what they claim to have been essential protection for her in her efforts to get off the sand-bar. This service, they contend, should more than balance any claims the claimants have presented on account of having hauled the *Archimedes* off the sands and towed her to port.

But, as has been said, there is one flaw in their argument. Counsel for the claimants were able to produce in evidence a written request for aid, implying acceptance of obligations, and signed by the commander of the *Archimedes*. While not a strictly legal document, this served to fix, beyond cavil, the justice of the claim entered against the *Archimedes*. By arrangement with the Greek Government, the salvage on the *Archimedes* has been fixed at ten thousand pounds.

"There, skipperr!" exclaimed Jock, "will ye speir at ma law-worrds anitherr time?"

"I will not, Jock, ye big, overrgrown sea-lawyerr," boomed McConaughy. "Norr will I comment on the overrbearrin' conceit o' ye, for I'm too happy at this moment to find fault wi' the most lackin' man in the whole o' Belfast."



The Code of His Fathers

by Hapsburg Liebe

Author of "Fiddlers Three," "The Man-Breaker," etc.

IT HAD its beginning more than fifty years ago. Shortly after Lee's surrender to Grant, two elderly ex-Confederate soldiers of the names Devine and Whitehall met in their home section, which was in eastern Tennessee, and proceeded forthwith to hold a sort of reunion and love-feast. For years before the breaking out of the war they had been neighbors and friends. In the course of their conversation, Whitehall remarked amiably, in substance:

"I'll never forget how you looked when I last saw you, comrade. You were marching past me at Fredericksburg. You stood badly in need of clothing, and you wore a turkey-red petticoat in lieu of trousers."

Now Devine had endured much bully-ragging over the enforced wearing of that petticoat, and he had become almost crazily sensitive about it. He flared up hotly—

"And the last time I saw you, I learned why you were so bald."

"Why?" sourly demanded Whitehall. He also had a sensitive point.

"You wore your hair off by walking on your head to keep the devil from tracking you," triumphantly said Devine.

At that psychological moment their dogs began to fight. A few more unpleasant words passed, and then Whitehall shot and badly wounded Devine and at the same time began a bitterness that has since put more than a score of good men in their graves—and only one of the principals was a mountaineer. Political differences, of course, were largely responsible for this long burning of the fires of contempt and hatred.

Gradually the Devines and their relatives had gathered within the limits of little old Johnsboro, seat of its county, where they had become buyers and sellers, lawyers and followers of the trade of politics; the Whitehalls and their relatives had gradually won rich plantations and farms lying convenient to the town of the Devines.

The Whitehalls slipped loaded rifles into their wagon-loads of grain and produce when the wagons went to Johnsboro; the Devines kept loaded rifles in their stores and law offices. A man riding into the domain of the other faction usually packed a revolver in an armpit holster. Sometimes these weapons grew rusty through years of disuse —and sometimes they didn't. There was never any telling when that old, old hatred would break through its cloak of frigid, square-dealing courtesy.

Early in June of last year the one son of the Whitehall chief graduated from a Nashville medical school, went home to set himself up as one of those uncalendared saints known as country doctors, met the one daughter of the Devine faction's chief and fell heels over head in love with her at first sight. It was not to be wondered at.

The daughter of old Judge Allison Devine was a slim and roundish and beautiful young woman, a blue-eyed Venus with golden-brown hair, and she had a certain irresistible way about her. Betty Devine immediately fell in love with young Cranford Whitehall, too—and neither was there occasion for wonder in this: Cranford Whitehall was a handsome fellow, physically perfect, and he also had ways about him. Like his fathers, he was a man who held honor highly, a thinker and a dreamer, and a fighter as long as there was anything that needed fighting.

Their love-affair had to be kept profoundly secret, of course. Day after day Whitehall met his adored and adoring Betty clandestinely under a spreading willow that stood in the fragrant, clover-filled meadow behind Judge Devine's great old house of brick and stone in the outskirts of Johnsboro. Each time they saw each other, they discussed the barrier that lay, extremely difficult if not wholly unsurmountable, between them and an altogether happy marriage, and tried to find a way over. The more they talked about it, the more hopeless it seemed to them. Any attempt to establish amicable relations between their two fathers would be, apparently, as futile as a whisper in Hades.

"If we married without letting them know, they'd disown us," Cranford would say. "What's the answer, Betty dear?"

Betty would shake her golden-brown head, and sometimes she would shed a tear or two, strong-natured as she was, because she wanted him so; and her sweetheart would unfailingly kiss her then and talk comfortingly to her as if she were a little, little girl.

"If there is really no other way, I guess we'll have to marry and let them disown us," young Whitehall said once.

"But I'd—I'd hate to do that," was Betty's half-sobbed reply.

Then there came a day toward the first of July when Betty Devine met her lover there in the fragrant green meadow with tidings that were sorry, indeed. Whitehall saw that she was much distressed before she had come within half a dozen rods of him, and he went quickly toward her.

"What's the matter, Betty dear?" he asked breathlessly. "Has your father found out?"

"No, no," panted Betty, "but it's something as bad. My cousin, Garlin Rowe, has just shot and killed your cousin, Dolliver Whitehall!"

Cranford took her two fluttering hands.

"Where did it occur? And how? Tell me all about it, Betty."

"In the rear of Hutton's drug-store. The two were playing cards, father said. Oh, I was beginning to hope the old feud was dying—there hadn't been a really cross word passed for more than a year. But now—now this will open the old wounds again, and that will make it even harder for us. What a shame, Cranford!"

Whitehall shook his head regretfully. He led Betty to the big, cool blot of shade thrown by the willow, and they sat down together in the clover. For a long minute neither spoke.

T. Garlin Rowe, who was related to the Devines only by marriage, was a widower of almost forty, a shyster lawyer, a political gambler, a gambler with cards and horses, and a gambler with his life. Huge in size he was, but not corpulent; he had the coal-black eyes, eyebrows and mustaches of Mephisto, nerves of steel, and the inborn cunning of a fox. The Devine leaders, for whom he did much service in many ways, were cleverly and completely deceived as to the shadiness of his methods. Even shrewd old Judge Allison Devine had more than once spoken of T. Garlin Rowe as a surpassingly able and brilliant man.

"Rowe will claim that he did it in defense of himself, of course, as he did when he killed that Louisville salesman three years ago," muttered Cranford Whitehall.

"Father told me," said Betty, "that Dolliver had accused Garlin of cheating. Dolliver, father says, drew a revolver and was about to fire when Garlin killed him. That is, this is the story Garlin and his witnesses tell. Hutton and one of his clerks are the witnesses."

"Doll wouldn't have drawn a revolver under such circumstances," declared Whitehall. "He would have feared Rowe too much for that. Doll's nature was too weak, too mild; he was our black sheep, Betty; he was like none of the rest of us. Because he was orphaned early in life, and because of our tender memories of his dead father and mother, we forgave him for his weaknesses and loved him, and pitied him, instead of holding him in contempt or casting him out. I have an idea that Rowe drew too many straight flushes for one game of cards, and that my cousin resented it. Then Rowe, I can easily imagine, shot Doll more because he was a Whitehall than for any other reason, and quickly arranged a story for Hutton and his clerk to tell as witnesses."

"It's very like him," Betty readily agreed, "it's very like Garlin Rowe to do that."

CRANFORD WHITEHALL told his Betty good-by, hurried to a winding lane, walked rapidly down it for a hundred yards, and disappeared in a wild-plum-tree thicket. Another minute, and he had mounted a spirited young black horse and was riding at a lively gait toward the scene of the tragedy.

The little, maple-shaded business section of Johnsboro lay around an old court-house of wood and plaster and a new jail of brick and stone. Whitehall drew up at the court-house hitching-rack, threw his horse's rein over a worn peg, dismounted and strode across the stony street and into Hutton's drug-store. There he found himself facing a score or more of stalwart, silent, grave-visaged men of the Devine faction, and he saw that every one of them was watching him closely.

"I want Garlin Rowe put in jail," he demanded in a bleak, white voice, in which there was some bitterness.

Judge Allison Devine stepped through the grave-visaged group. The judge was a tall and lean, smooth-faced man, gray-haired, with features that were as indicative of great strength of character as those of Old Hickory Jackson. He wore a buff-colored alpine hat, a stiff white shirt and collar and a slim black string tie, a black Prince Albert coat, gray trousers and soft black shoes.

"Garlin Rowe has already been placed in jail, sir," he said. "He will be tried at the next term of court, sir, and he will get justice according to the letter of the law. If it is your desire to take away the body of your unfortunate cousin, you will find it at Thornton Devine's Seed, Farming Implement, Furniture and Undertaking Establishment. Is there any further information that I can give you, sir?"

How cold was his voice and his courtesy! Cranford Whitehall forgot that he was Betty's father and therefore beloved of Betty, and answered in a voice that was equally frigid:

"There is not—thank you, sir!"

Each man bowed slightly and very stiffly, as duelists bow on that which they are pleased to term a field of honor, and young Whitehall hastened to Thornton Devine's place.

A sadness that was extraordinary even for a funeral pervaded the Whitehall churchyard on the afternoon of the day following. The only person who had anything to say was the minister, and that which he said came a little huskily.

Grave-faced men in black, all of them with smoldering fire in their eyes, stood with bent heads, listened and heard not. Finely featured and sad-eyed women, also in black, also stood with bent heads and listened and heard not. Yes, they had loved poor Dolliver, weak as he was. And

they knew, as well as if they had seen it, that he had been foully murdered.

When it was over, Cranford Whitehall rode home beside his father, and neither spoke on the one-mile journey. Old Elberton Whitehall was a great deal like old Judge Allison Devine in that he was tall and lean, smooth-faced, and strong of character; he was a man who weighed his words even more carefully, perhaps, than the judge.

At the gate in front of their big, white plantation home father and son dismounted and gave over the reins of their horses to a negro stable-boy; then they went to the broad veranda, threw off their coats because of the extreme warmth of the day, and sat down in roomy and comfortable, old-fashioned wicker rockers. The mingled odors of cape jessamines in green-painted tubs, roses and honeysuckles, were almost overpowering in their sweetness.

Old Elberton Whitehall spoke to his son.

"I seriously doubt that any Whitehall interest would get what it deserved in a Johnsboro court, Cranford. If the Devines and their court do not give Garlin Rowe justice, then the Whitehalls must give Garlin Rowe justice."

"The trouble will be that the decision of the court will be based entirely on the testimony of Hutton and his clerk," said young Whitehall. "And Hutton and his clerk will swear falsely in order to clear Rowe."

"Certainly, certainly," nodded the Whitehall chief.

"How, in what way, do you mean to punish Garlin Rowe in the event his trial clears him?" asked Cranford.

Elberton Whitehall smiled somehow queerly.

"How, in what way," said he, "are murderers punished by the State?"

"By hanging, I believe."

"Then if the State doesn't hang Rowe, the Whitehalls must hang Rowe," calmly said old Whitehall.

"But that—wouldn't that be pretty bad?"

"No worse than the killing of poor Dolliver, son."

"And following the hanging of Garlin Rowe after he had been cleared by the law, the law would hang about fifteen Whitehalls," muttered the younger man, painedly.

"Maybe so," in a voice that was still unruffled. "Cranford, my son, it's time you were learning the code of your fathers."

"Can you put that code into words?" asked Cranford thoughtfully.

Elberton Whitehall drew his gray brows and narrowed his keen old eyes.

"It used to be," he said evenly, "in the days when the Whitehalls—and the Devines too—hadn't quite so much education as they've got now, that the code was worded like this: 'A man who ain't game enough to give his lowdown life for his principles ain't worth a damn.' Paste it in your hat, son. Write it on the wall over the head of your bed. Have it put on your tombstone when you die. Now don't you raise the question of false principles. It's hard to tell which is the true and which is the false—and it's better to be true to false principles than to be false to true principles. The men most hated of high Heaven, son, are the hypocrites and the cowards. Remember that."

"It's philosophy," said Cranford. "It's well worth remembering. I like the code very much."

Cranford Whitehall began to think again of Betty Devine and of the barrier that lay, growing steadily greater now, between them and a happy marriage. For a long time there was silence save for the lazy droning of bees and the songs of golden-throated mockingbirds. Then the elder Whitehall rose and walked slowly into the house.

THE SUMMER days went on by. Cranford did but little in his chosen profession; he had not tried to build up a practise, because of those other things that lay so heavily on his mind. He saw Betty at their meeting-place in the judge's meadow frequently, and they made love harder than ever because their hopes were so thin—which is according to the nature of human beings.

On the day before Garlin Rowe was tried for the killing of Dolliver Whitehall, Betty's lover met her under the great willow once more. Betty fully understood the seriousness of the situation that existed between her father's faction and the faction to which her sweetheart belonged. It had saddened her much; it had half broken her heart. One who has never been put to the acid test of choosing between an idolized father and a much-adored sweetheart can not readily know Betty Devine's feelings when she met Cranford Whitehall there under the willow that once more.

"Stay as long as you can, Cranford," she

said to him as he took both her hands and kissed them tenderly, "because we may never have another chance to even meet each other here again. So many, many things may happen if Garlin Rowe is not convicted as he should be, Cranford."

"Yes, so many things," admitted Whitehall. He saw that there was no need of trying to deceive her now. "We'll make the most of this meeting, Betty dear."

Before he left her that afternoon, he told her of the code of his fathers as it had been given to him.

"It's a good code," said Betty. "Be true to it. But try to make your principles all good ones, Cranford."

When he told her good-by at sunset, she bent her golden-brown head and didn't speak. He went a little blindly toward the young black horse that stood hidden in the thicket of wild-plum-trees. Betty watched him go with a tight swelling of her throat, and with blue, blue eyes that saw him dimly because of the mist. She told herself gloomily that never again would she hear his sweet "Betty dear," which he had always spoken as if the two words were one and inseparable. And when he was out of her sight, Betty sat down in the fragrant green clover and cried.

AS THE Whitehalls had expected, the murderer came clear on a self-defense basis. But, contrary to the expectations of the Whitehalls, Garlin Rowe had what the Johnsboro court considered a fair trial.

Hutton and his clerk, witnesses for the defendant, told well-rounded stories that paralleled each other even in the smallest and most insignificant details; they had rehearsed those stories sufficiently to admit of no tripping under the grilling of the prosecuting attorney. Only a few of the dead man's relatives were present at the trial; the Whitehalls wished to show but little interest in the matter, which they hoped would serve as a blinder to that which they meant to do afterward. When court had adjourned, one of these men said as if casually to Judge Devine.

"Do you reckon the fish law will hold?"

"I think it will, sir," politely answered the judge.

"Seems to me it's a very unsportsmanlike law, sir," went on the Whitehall. "It lets the fish be shot and speared and netted and trapped, and otherwise murdered while they're on the shoals in the Spring, the spawning season; then it forbids a man to catch one with a baited hook until the best of the Summer fishing is gone!"

"I did not make the law, sir," replied Judge Devine.

The Whitehall laughed, bowed slightly and walked away. He and his relatives mounted their horses and rode out of town as quietly as if they had been only to the post-office.

These men went straight to the home of their leader. Old Elberton Whitehall heard their story very calmly.

"Come in and get something to eat," he said. "Then we'll go to the schoolhouse."

It had already been agreed that there should be a meeting of the faction that afternoon in the big white schoolhouse that stood on a low hill not far from the home of the Whitehall chief. There was no school at that time of year.

Young Cranford Whitehall was the first to reach the schoolhouse door. He noted absently the line that some childish swain had written there with colored chalk—"Merry carson Said She loved me." He sat down on the steps and began to think, and the thoughts that came to him were torturing. A great deal of his thinking was of Betty Devine, but not all of it. Somehow it did not seem right to take the law into one's own hands. And yet the acquittal of Garlin Rowe, killer of two men, had certainly not been right. Before his father arrived with the key, he had evolved a plan—a rather sorry plan, perhaps, but a better one than the other.

The big room was soon filled with young, middle-aged and old men, all of them grim and silent, all of them determined. It was not an unreasoning, fanatical mob spirit that prevailed there: it was something much nearer the true and original American spirit. Then Cranford Whitehall's father walked slowly to the teacher's desk, turned and stood looking over the faces of his kinsmen.

"Men," he began solemnly, "I want you all to know what you're going up against when you hang Garlin Rowe after a court had tried him and declared him free of guilt. You're going up against something hard. It means that every man who has a hand in it stands a good chance of swinging at a rope's end himself—don't forget that a dozen men may be hung for the killing of only one. It

would not be possible for us to accomplish this thing without anybody's being caught and convicted. Besides, there are other and nearer dangers. We will have to fight our way out of Johnsboro with Garlin Rowe, and Garlin Rowe is apt to kill one or two of us before we get our hands on him. If any of you wishes to withdraw in safety and go home to a bottle of boiled milk and a pacifier, let him do it now. In a minute it will be too late. It's a matter of principle, gentlemen. The Devines must not be permitted to establish a precedent like this."

Not a man moved. Not a man looked to see whether any other man moved.

"If anybody has a suggestion to offer concerning our present plan," continued Elberton Whitehall, "let's hear it."

Cranford Whitehall rose and went to the teacher's desk. His father gave him the floor and dropped into a near-by chair. Slowly, evenly, convincingly, Cranford addressed his relatives:

"As we all know, the end in view is the proper punishment of Garlin Rowe the murderer, of whose absolute guilt we have not the least doubt. The thing to be desired, then, is to accomplish that end—" for it had to be accomplished, in some way; there was no getting around that—"at the very smallest possible cost. I beg leave to offer an objection to this plan of riding into Johnsboro in full force for Garlin Rowe. That would mean a big fight. Lives would be lost for nothing. Rowe and his friends are more or less on their guard in spite of our slight show of interest during the trial. Afterward we would have to reckon with the law, which would be a serious thing.

"Now one man is all that is necessary to bring about the end desired. One is all that is necessary to lose by death at the hands of the Devines or by death at the hand of the law. There is no need of us all running the risk. And this one should be an unmarried man, in order that there may be no widow, no fatherless children.

"There are thirty-two such men in the house; I have already counted them. I suggest that the thirty-two cast lots, the man with the black ticket to ride into Johnsboro this same day and shoot down Garlin Rowe. I admit that I don't like even that plan, somehow; but I don't know anything better to suggest. What do I hear, gentlemen?"

A big, black-bearded, hawk-eyed fellow from the foothills of the Unakas rose quickly. His name was Abner Light; he was a distant cousin of Cranford Whitehall's and the best fiddler in the county. Abner Light was primitive; he was strong for blood-red melodramatics and many fireworks, and his cousin's more sensible plan had nettled him.

"You not to take no chanst yoreself, a course," he drawled in the drawl of the mountains; it was almost a sneer.

Cranford Whitehall had inherited plenty of temper. His anger blazed up white and hot. It was the first time anybody had ever dared to say anything like that to him.

"I'll take two chances!" he bristled. "I counted myself in the thirty-two, Abner. Being no great shakes as a gunman, I'm not half as apt to ride back alive as you'd be, and yet I'll take two chances!"

"Son, son!" chided old Elberton Whitehall, rising. "Sit down, son, and cool off a little, or you're likely to melt and run together. One chance is enough for you, and one is all you're going to take."

There was no gainsaying him, and his son knew it. The Whitehall chief then said to the others:

"The boy's suggestion is extremely sensible. When he mentioned widows and fatherless children, he won me. Nothing is quite so bad as widows and fatherless children, gentlemen. If anybody objects to the new plan, let him rise to his feet—and I'll be —— if I don't shoot him! Please understand, all of you, that I'm one of the chance-takers myself. My boy's mother, you know, she's been dead for a long time, gentlemen. We will now arrange the lots."

The thirty-three eligibles—Elberton Whitehall did take a chance, in spite of a great many protests—were numbered. For each of them, a small square of cardboard was cut and numbered correspondingly; then the squares were put into a hat and shaken until they were well mixed. Following this, a man with a handkerchief over his eyes picked out one of the little squares and held it up to be read.

For a moment the silence was heavy. Surely, it was the work of Fate the trickster! Cranford Whitehall, who had suggested this new plan, who had wished to save lives by this new plan, had drawn the fatal ticket! But neither by word, look nor action did he evince the slightest regret or fear, and neither did his strong-hearted father. Truly, El-

berton Whitehall was a strong-hearted father, or he could hardly have borne it. Cranford was his only son and the pride of his heart, the joy of his life. He never had had a daughter. And Cranford had the dark-brown hair and the big brown eyes of his poor little, long-dead mother.

"You'll be apt to find Garlin Rowe sitting on the veranda of the inn from sundown until after dark, my son," very, very quietly. "They gather there always after supper, you know, to smoke and lie. Wait until dark. And when you shoot, ride—*ride*—ride hard and zigzag."

They clasped hands, father and son. There was no word of farewell—I don't know why, unless it was that words expressed nothing in so bitter a parting, or that each carried a faint, struggling hope somewhere down in his heart. Cranford Whitehall turned and walked out of the schoolhouse, went to his horse, mounted and rode away alone toward Johnsboro.

He had gone but a quarter of a mile when the clatter of hoofs on the hard-beaten road behind him drew his attention. In another moment Abner Light, sitting astride a brown, wicked-looking mule, rode up beside him.

"I'm goin' over to Blind Bill Hadley's to borrow a fiddle string," said Light. "Ef you don't keer, I'll ride wi' ye a little ways. You shore sp'iled the main big show, Cranford, dang yore eyes. What a hawg-killin' time we'd 'a' had ef you hadn't 'a' stuck yore mouth into it! By gad, I could 'a' mashed it. Ef I die afore I thrash you for that, Cranford, I'll die mighty bad onsatisfied!"

Whitehall forgot that Light had never had the opportunities that he had had. All that was pent up in Whitehall's breast now broke out in a great and unreasoning wrath. He leaned quickly to one side, caught Abner Light by the collar of his blue flannel shirt and dragged him from the saddle, and in so doing was dragged from his own saddle.

Once on the ground, the two began to fight hard, fist and skull. Light was the heavier and the stronger, but Whitehall knew much of the arts of wrestling and boxing. After three minutes of this rough-and-tumble fighting, Whitehall left his fiery-natured hill cousin lying half unconscious in the dust, mounted his young black horse and rode on toward Johnsboro.

A glance at the sun told him that he would arrive in the little town too soon by an hour unless he rode slowly, so he rode slowly. He met but one person before he reached the outskirts, and that one person was only a barefoot boy with a cane fishing-rod in his hand.

"I couldn't find no young waspses for bait," moaned the urchin as they passed.

Whitehall had taken the road that led past Judge Devine's house purposely. He wanted another glimpse of his Betty dear. She was not in the rose garden, nor was she on the lawn or on the veranda. Unmindful of what it might lead to in unpleasantness for Betty—for no love save that called friendship may be wholly unselfish—he halted his horse at the white picket fence and hallooed.

Betty came out immediately, ran to him, looked up and gave him a very sweet smile. She wore a dress of fluffy white. The dying sunlight glinted in her golden-brown hair.

"Cranford!" she cried. There was a newly born gladness in her voice.

"I shouldn't have called you like this," deprecated Whitehall. "But I felt that I had to see you."

His face was pale. Betty, too, went pale.

"What's the matter, Cranford?" she asked fearsomely, smotheredly.

"It may be," said the young man, "that I'll go on a long journey."

"Where?" quickly.

He couldn't tell her that.

"I'm not—not sure that I'll go," he said a little lamely.

Judge Devine, dressed with his usual great care, more patrician-like than ever, came walking across the lawn toward them.

"Good evening, Cranford," was his greeting—and it came pleasantly!

"Good evening, sir," muttered Whitehall.

The judge came on and stopped at the side of the daughter he idolized, worshiped.

"Betty has told me all about it, Cranford," he said. "I'm all she's got, you know. She's like you in that she has no mother, no brother, no sister. We talked about your affair for half of last night, Cranford. I'm not the bear you think I am, perhaps. I want my little girl to be happy. If you were not a Whitehall, I—I—well, I reckon I ought to beg your pardon for saying that. You ought to love her! If you could have heard her pleading your case last night before the bar of—of—you know what, don't you? Of course you do.

By George, sir! I never thought I'd give in as I did! But I'm old now, boy; and when a man's old—he's old. I'd like to leave my little girl happy when I go out, Cranford. She won't be happy without you, she says. And she is just like that. The Devines were all just like that."

He looked away at nothing. His eyes were very dim. The tragedy of old age, one of the grimmest of all of life's tragedies, was upon him. It was somehow pitiful.

Cranford Whitehall's head reeled when at last he understood. Now that half the old barrier was removed, a new barrier, the barrier of death, loomed high and impossible between him and his Betty. Surely, Fate was a trickster!

It suddenly dawned upon him that he was about to weaken toward his terrible mission, and he set his teeth grimly. When he came to himself, he saw that the judge had gone. He bent over, put an arm around Betty's neck and kissed her almost savagely; then he spurred his horse and rode swiftly away, leaving her wondering dumbly. But soon she would understand, he knew.

Never before had he railed at Fate. Always, before, he had been inclined to hoot at the mention of it; it had been a stout belief of his that a man worked out his own destiny. Now the hot blood that had been given to him by generations of hot-blooded ancestors rose in him and filled him with a strange, wild, daredevil spirit. He smiled queerly as he rode down into the business section of Johnsboro, in the gathering twilight.

YELLOW street-lamps winked at him as he entered the gloom cast by the thickly-leaved old maples. A marble-cutter's yard to his left caught his attention; under a shed of rough boards an old man worked with mallet and chisel by the light of a nickel-plated lamp. Before him were dozens of white tombstones on display. The exhibit worried Whitehall, taunted him; already Death was flinging its cold, pale banners in his face.

He jerked his horse's rein, and the animal came to a stop. At that instant a jarring laugh from the acetylene-lighted veranda of the inn, some seventy yards farther down the stony street, came to Whitehall's ears. He looked and saw that it was Garlin Rowe the murderer who was laughing. Rowe wore a suit of dark clothing; the corner of a white handkerchief hung over the edge of the breast pocket of his coat, squarely over his heart, and it made an excellent target. Whitehall told himself that he would shoot at that little triangle, when he shot.

The code of the fighting Whitehalls came back to him again. He thought of what his father had said: "Paste it in your hat, son. Write it on the wall over the head of your bed. Have it put on your tombstone when you die." The daredevil spirit rose higher and yet higher within him. He would have it put on his tombstone—he would order the stone now, and pay for it in advance. He would call the hands of Fate and Death, and be a good loser.

"Please come out here for a minute," he said to the marble-cutter.

The old man dropped his tools and hastened to obey.

"See that plain, square white stone there," said Whitehall, pointing a steady finger. "I want one like that. Let me have pencil and paper, and I'll show you how I want it lettered."

He ordered the old man to letter it like this:

IN MEMORY
of
CRANFORD WHITEHALL

A man who ain't game enough to give his low-down life for his principles ain't worth a damn

Yes, he had called the hands of Fate and Death. He paid the old man and rode on. Then he saw a tiny spurt of red flame pierce the blackness that lay around a corner of the old court-house, and a second later there was the dull roar of a revolver of heavy caliber—and T. Garlin Rowe leaped to his feet, then crumpled to the floor of the inn's acetylene-lighted veranda like a wet rag.

A great gladness filled young Whitehall's heart—he knew that he was saved. If it became necessary, he could easily prove an alibi by the old marble-cutter.

Another minute, and he had ridden across the rough sidewalk and to a point within two yards of Garlin Rowe. He saw that the heavy bullet had struck the center of

the little, white triangle; the unknown killer of Garlin Rowe had been a perfect marksman, indeed.

"Examine him, quick!" cried one of Rowe's friends, catching the young doctor by the arm.

"Hopeless," quietly said Doctor Cranford Whitehall. And he added, with a narrowing of his fine brown eyes: "That's just where the Louisville drummer and my Cousin Dolliver were shot, and their cases, you know, were hopeless. Nothing can be done for him except to bury him."

No attempt was made to detain Whitehall. It was very plain that he was not the guilty man. Before he left the scene, he sought out the marble-cutter and whispered to him this:

"I think I made some mistakes concerning the lettering of that stone. I don't want it for myself, of course, but for my Cousin Dolliver. How absent-minded I am! I'll see you to-morrow and attend to the matter. Good night!"

He had hardly reached the outskirts when he met his father on horseback. Old Elberton Whitehall had not been able to wait at home for news of his son. He seemed dazed.

"Cranford," he muttered hoarsely, as they drew rein, "Cranford, my boy—did you do it?"

Their hands met and clasped hard in a moment of silence. The son explained as far as he could. Then he told about his love affair with Betty, and of that which Judge Allison Devine had said to him.

"So he actually means to let her marry you!" said Elberton Whitehall, much surprised.

"Yes," said Cranford. He put a hand on his father's shoulder and demanded squarely, "Would you let a Devine go you one better, dad?"

The answer came very readily:

"Never, my son, never. It would be against the Whitehall principles. Marry her, Cranford, God bless her! Better go and try to explain about that long journey, hadn't you? Be careful now, boy, and don't lie if you can get around it. And you might tell the judge that I'll drop in to see him at his office to-morrow. The feud that began with a dog-fight has lasted long enough, I reckon. By George, Cranford, I'm happy to have you back alive! And we've got Abner Light to thank for it. He's the only man in the county that could have hit as small a target as that with a revolver, at that distance." Old Whitehall finished in a whisper.

"Abner Light!" Cranford exclaimed in a low tone, as he turned his horse's head toward the great old brick and stone house of Judge Devine. "Why, I thrashed Abner Light this afternoon!"

"That doesn't matter," said the elder Whitehall. "It was this way, son. Abner insulted you at the schoolhouse, you know. Then when he saw how game you were when you had drawn the black ticket, his regret broke his heart. Really broke his heart. So he decided to take your place by way of making amends. Don't you see? He picked that road quarrel with you in order to create evidence in his favor in the event investigation turned the finger of suspicion toward him. He's cunning. Don't you see? But there'll never be any hereafter about it, Cranford. It takes proof to convict a man."

They parted. The one went to his Betty, and the other rode rapidly homeward. Elberton Whitehall had not gone far when he overtook a big, black-bearded fellow mounted on a slow-going, dull brown mule.

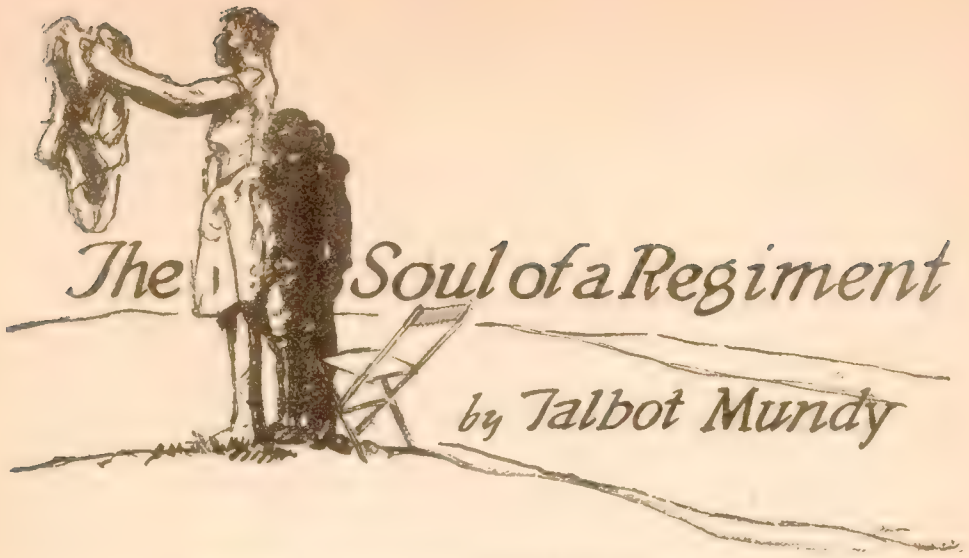
"Where have you been, Abner?" he asked.

"Me?" grinned Abner Light. "Down to Blind Bill Hadley's to borrow a fiddle string."

"Stuff!" exclaimed old Whitehall. "You needn't mind telling me, Abner. I've already guessed everything. I'm very much obliged to you, Abner."

But had he already guessed everything? I'm not sure. The mountaineer said to him this, very solemnly:

"Any man as could lick me thataway, Eb, was too danged good a man to feed right into the grave. I ain't never been licked afore, Eb. I thought I could do it and git out alive, Eb, and I knowed Cranford couldn't."



The Soul of a Regiment

by Talbot Mundy

Author of "Gulbaz and the Game," "The Winds of the World," etc.

IN THE six and a half years of its existence *Adventure* has published nearly a thousand short stories. A large part of them have met with such favor that many of our readers have spoken or written to register their liking. But of them all no other story has received so much or such enthusiastic praise as has "The Soul of a Regiment," published in *Adventure* for February, 1912. Copies of that issue are so hard to get that even we here in the office have had to have typewritten copies of this story made for our use.

Since the story appeared our circulation has doubled, so that many of our present readers have never read it. We know that our old readers will welcome it again, for it is the kind of tale that can be read many times. A masterpiece of its type. We have never republished a story before; we are glad and proud to do so in this case.

There is, too, particular reason for printing it at this time. Next month there will be a new story by Talbot Mundy, one of his best. You can get its full force and finest values only if you have first read "The Soul of a Regiment." Yet the second story is not strictly a sequel to the first. When you come to the end of "The Soul of a Regiment" you have come to the end of it. It is final and complete, there is nothing that need be added, nothing that can be taken away. But in the story a seed was sowed and in after years that seed grew and bore fruit. The second tale is the tale of that fruiting. And it is worthy of the first.—THE EDITORS.

SO LONG as its colors remain, and there is one man left to carry them, a regiment can never die; they can recruit it again around that one man, and the regiment will continue the same old traditions behind it and the same atmosphere surrounding it that made brave men of its forebears. So, although the colors are not exactly the soul of the regiment, they are the concrete embodiment of it, and are even more sacred then the person of a reigning sovereign.

The First Egyptian Foot had colors—and has them still, thanks to Billy Grogram; so the First Egyptian Foot is still a regiment. It was the very first of all the regiments raised in Egypt, and the colors were lovely crimson things on a brand-new polished pole, cased in the regulation jacket of black waterproof and housed with all pomp and ceremony in the mess-room at the barracks.

There were people who said that it was bad policy to present colors to a native regiment; that they were nothing more than a symbol of a decadent and waning monarchism in any case, and that the respect which would be due them might lead dangerously near to fetish-worship. As a matter of cold fact, though, the raw recruits of the regiment failed utterly to understand them, and it was part of Billy Grogram's business to instil in them a wholesome respect for the sacred symbol of regimental honor.

He was Sergeant-Instructor William Stan-

ford Grogram, V.C., D.S.M., to give him his full name and title, late a sergeant-major of the True and Tried, time expired, and retired from service on a pension. His pension would have been enough for him to live on, for he was unmarried, his habits were exemplary, and his wants were few; but an elder brother of his had been a ne'er-do-well, and Grogram, who was of the type that will die rather than let any one of his depend on charity, left the army with a sister-in-law and a small tribe of children dependent on him. Work, of course, was the only thing for it, and he applied promptly for the only kind of work that he knew how to do.

The British are always making new regiments out of native material in some part of the world; they come cheaper than white troops, and, with a sprinkling of white troops in among them, they do wonderfully good service in time of war—thanks to the sergeant-instructors. The officers get the credit for it, but it is ex-non-commissioned officers of the Line who do the work, as Grogram was destined to discover. They sent him out to instruct the First Egyptian Foot and it turned out to be the toughest proposition that any one lonely, determined, homesick fighting-man ever ran up against.

He was not looking for a life of idleness and ease, so the discomfort of his new quarters did not trouble him over-much, though they would have disgusted another man at the very beginning. They gave him a little, whitewashed, mud-walled hut, with two bare rooms in it, and a lovely view on three sides of aching desert sand; on the fourth was a blind wall.

It was as hot inside as a baker's oven, but it had the one great advantage of being easily kept clean, and Grogram, whose fetish was cleanliness, bore that in mind, and forbore to grumble at the absence of a sergeants' mess and the various creature comforts that his position had entitled him to for years.

What did disgust him, though, was the unfairness of saddling the task that lay in front of him on the shoulders of one lone man; his officers made it quite clear that they had no intention of helping him in the least; from the colonel downward they were ashamed of the regiment, and they expected Grogram to work it into something like shape before they even began to take an interest in it.

The colonel went even further than that; he put in an appearance at Orderly Room every morning and once a week attended a parade out on the desert where nobody could see the awful evolutions of his raw command, but he actually threw cold water on Grogram's efforts at enthusiasm.

"You can't make a silk purse out of a sow's ear," he told him a few mornings after Grogram joined, "or well-drilled soldiers out of Gyppies. Heaven only knows what the Home Government means by trying to raise a regiment out here; at the very best we'll be only teaching the enemy to fight us! But you'll find they won't learn. However, until the Government finds out what a ghastly mistake's being made, there's nothing for it but to obey orders and drill Gyppies. Go ahead, Grogram; I give you a free hand. Try anything you like on them, but don't ask me to believe there'll be any result from it. Candidly I don't."

BUT GROGRAM happened to be a different type of man from his new colonel. After a conversation such as that, he could have let things go hang had he chosen to, drawing his pay, doing his six hours' work a day along the line of least resistance, and blaming the inevitable consequences on the colonel. But to him a duty was something to be done; an impossibility was something to set his clean-shaven, stubborn jaw at and overcome; and a regiment was a regiment, to be kneaded and pummeled and damned and coaxed and drilled, till it began to look as the True and Tried used to look in the days when he was sergeant-major.

So he twisted his little brown mustache and drew himself up to the full height of his five feet, eight inches, spread his well-knit shoulders, straightened his ramrod of a back and got busy on the job, while his colonel and the other officers did the social rounds in Cairo and cursed their luck.

The material that Grogram had to work with were fellaheen—good, honest, coal-black negroes, giants in stature, the embodiment of good-humored incompetence, children of the soil weaned on rawhide whips under the blight of Turkish misrule and Arab cruelty. They had no idea that they were even men till Grogram taught them; and he had to learn Arabic first before he could teach them even that.

They began by fearing him, as their an-

cestors had feared every new breed of task-master for centuries; gradually they learned to look for instant and amazing justice at his hands, and from then on they respected him. He caned them instead of getting them fined by the colonel or punished with pack-drill for failing at things they did not understand; they were thoroughly accustomed to the lash, and his light swagger-cane laid on their huge shoulders was a joke that served merely to point his argument and fix his lessons in their memories; they would not have understood the colonel's wrath had he known that the men of his regiment were being beaten by a non-commissioned officer.

They began to love him when he harked back to the days when he was a recruit himself, and remembered the steps of a double-shuffle that he had learned in the barrack-room; when he danced a buck-and-wing dance for them they recognized him as a man and a brother, and from that time on, instead of giving him all the trouble they could and laughing at his lectures when his back was turned, they genuinely tried to please him.

So he studied out more steps, and danced his way into their hearts, growing daily stricter on parade, daily more exacting of pipe-clay and punctuality, and slowly, but surely as the march of time, molding them into something like a regiment.

Even he could not teach them to shoot, though he sweated over them on the dazzling range until the sun dried every drop of sweat out of him. And for a long time he could not even teach them to march; they would keep step for a hundred yards or so and then lapse into the listless, shrinking stride that was the birthright of centuries.

He pestered the colonel for a band of sorts until the colonel told him angrily to go to blazes; then he wrote home and purchased six fifes with his own money, bought a native drum in the bazaar, and started a band on his own account.

Had he been able to read music himself he would have been no better off, because, of course, the fellaheen he had to teach could not have read it either, though possibly he might have slightly increased the number of tunes in their repertoire.

As it was, he knew only two tunes himself—"The Campbells Are Coming," and the national anthem.

He picked the six most intelligent men he could find and whistled those two tunes to them until his lips were dry and his cheeks ached and his very soul revolted at the sound of them. But the six men picked them up; and, of course, any negro in the world can beat a drum. One golden morning before the sun had heated up the desert air the regiment marched past in really good formation, all in step, and tramping to the tune of "God Save the Queen."

The colonel nearly had a fit, but the regiment tramped on and the band played them back to barracks with a swing and rhythm that was new not only to the First Egyptian Foot; it was new to Egypt! The tune was half a tone flat maybe, and the drum was a sheepskin business bought in the bazaar, but a new regiment marched behind it. And behind the regiment—two paces right flank, as the regulations specify—marched a sergeant-instructor with a new light in his eyes—the gray eyes that had looked out so wearily from beneath the shaggy eyebrows, and that shone now with the pride of a deed well done.

OF COURSE the colonel was still scornful. But Billy Grogram, who had handled men when the colonel was cutting his teeth at Sandhurst, and who knew men from the bottom up, knew that the mob of unambitious countrymen who had grinned at him in uncomfortable silence when he first arrived, was beginning to forget its mobdom. He, who spent his hard-earned leisure talking to them and answering their childish questions in hard-won Arabic, knew that they were slowly grasping the theory of the thing—that a soul was forming in the regiment—an indefinable, unexplainable, but obvious change, perhaps not unlike the change from infancy to manhood.

And Billy Grogram, who above all was a man of clean ideals, began to feel content. He still described them in his letters home as "blooming mummies made of Nile mud, roasted black for their sins, and good for nothing but the ash-heap." He still damned them on parade, whipped them when the colonel wasn't looking, and worked at them until he was much too tired to sleep; but he began to love them. And to a big, black, grinning man of them they loved him.

To encourage that wondrous band of his, he set them to playing their two tunes on guest nights outside the officers' mess; and

the officers endured it until the colonel returned from furlough. He sent for Grogram and offered to pay him back all he had spent on instruments, provided the band should keep away in future.

Grogram refused the money and took the hint, inventing weird and hitherto unheard-of reasons why it should be unrighteous for the band to play outside the mess, and preaching respect for officers in spite of it. Like all great men he knew when he had made a mistake, and how to minimize it.

His hardest task was teaching the Gyppies what their colors meant. The men were Mohammedans; they lived in Allah; they had been taught from the time when they were old enough to speak that idols and the outward symbols of religion are the sign of heresy; and Grogram's lectures, delivered in stammering and uncertain Arabic, seemed to them like the ground-plan of a new religion. But Grogram stuck to it. He made opportunities for saluting the colors—took them down each morning and uncased them, and treated them with an ostentatious respect that would have been laughed at among his own people.

When his day's work was done and he was too tired to dance for them, he would tell them long tales, done into halting Arabic, of how regiments had died rallying round their colors; of a brand-new paradise, invented by himself and suitable to all religions, where soldiers went who honored their colors as they ought to do; of the honor that befell a man who died fighting for them, and of the tenfold honor of the man whose privilege it was to carry them into action. And in the end, although they did not understand him, they respected the colors because he told them to.

II

WHEN England hovered on the brink of indecision and sent her greatest general to hold Khartum with only a handful of native troops to help him, the First Egyptian Foot refused to leave their gaudy crimson rag behind them. They marched with colors flying down to the steamer that was to take them on the first long stage of their journey up the Nile, and there were six fifes and a drum in front of them that told whoever cared to listen that "The Campbells were coming—hurrah! hurrah!"

They marched with the measured tramp of a real regiment; they carried their chins high; their tarbooshes were cocked at a knowing angle, and they swung from the hips like grown men. At the head of the regiment rode a colonel whom the regiment scarcely knew, and beside it marched a dozen officers in like predicament; but behind it, his sword strapped to his side and his little swagger-cane tucked under his left arm-pit, inconspicuous, smiling and content, marched Sergeant-Instructor Grogram, whom the regiment knew and loved. and who had made and knew the regiment,

The whole civilized world knows—and England knows to her enduring shame—what befell General Gordon and his handful of men when they reached Khartum. Gordon surely guessed what was in store for him even before he started, his subordinates may have done so, and the native soldiers knew. But Sergeant-Instructor Grogram neither knew nor cared.

He looked no further than his duty, which was to nurse the big black babies of his regiment and to keep them good-tempered, grinning and efficient; he did that as no other living man could have done it, and kept on doing it until the bitter end.

And his task can have been no sinecure. The Mahdi—the ruthless terror of the Upper Nile who ruled by systematized and savage cruelty and lived by plunder—was as much a bogy to peaceful Egypt as Napoleon used to be to Europe, and with far more reason. Mothers frightened their children into prompt obedience by the mere mention of his name, and the coal-black natives of the Nile-mouth country are never more than grown-up children.

It must have been as easy to take that regiment to Khartum as to take a horse into a burning building, but when they reached there not a man was missing; they marched in with colors flying and their six-fife band playing, and behind them—two paces right flank rear—marched Billy Grogram, his little swagger-cane under his left arm-pit, neat, respectful and very wide awake.

For a little while Cairo kept in touch with them, and then communications ceased. Nobody ever learned all the details of the tragedy that followed; there was a curtain drawn of mystery and silence such as has always veiled the heart of darkest Africa.

Lord Wolseley took his expedition up the Nile, whipped the Dervishes at El Teb and

Tel-el-Kebir, and reached Khartum, to learn of Gordon's death, but not the details of it. Then he came back again; and the Mahdi followed him, closing up the route behind him, wiping all trace of civilization off the map and placing what he imagined was an insuperable barrier between him and the British—a thousand miles of plundered, ravished, depopulated wilderness.

So a clerk in a musty office drew a line below the record of the First Egyptian Foot; widows were duly notified; a pension or two was granted; and the regiment that Billy Grogram had worked so hard to build was relegated to the past, like Billy Grogram.

RUMORS had come back along with Wolseley's men that Grogram had gone down fighting with his regiment; there was a story that the band had been taken alive and turned over to the Mahdi's private service, and one prisoner, taken near Khartum, swore that he had seen Grogram speared as he lay wounded before the Residency. There was a battalion of the True and Tried with Wolseley, and the men used methods that may have been not strictly ethical in seeking tidings of their old sergeant-major; but even they could get no further details; he had gone down fighting with his regiment, and that was all about him.

Then men forgot him. The long steady preparation soon began for the new campaign that was to wipe the Mahdi off the map, restore peace to Upper Egypt, regain Khartum and incidentally avenge Gordon. Regiments were slowly drafted out from home as barracks could be built for them; new regiments of native troops were raised and drilled by ex-sergeants of the Line who never heard of Grogram; new men took charge; and the Sirdar superintended everything and laid his reputation brick by brick, of bricks which he made himself, and men were too busy under him to think of anything except the work in hand.

But rumors kept coming in, as they always do in Egypt, filtering in from nowhere over the illimitable desert, borne by stray camel-drivers, carried by Dervish spies, tossed from tongue to tongue through the fish-market, and carried up back stairs to clubs and Department offices. There were tales of a drummer and three men who played the fife and a wonderful mad Feringee who danced as no man surely ever danced before. The tales varied, but there were always four musicians and a Feringee.

When one Dervish spy was caught and questioned he swore by the beard of the Prophet that he had seen the men himself. He was told promptly that he was a liar. How came it that a Feringee—a pork-fed, infidel Englishman—should be allowed to live anywhere where the Mahdi's long arm reached?

"Whom God hath touched—" the Dervish quoted; and men remembered that madness is the surest passport throughout the whole of northern Africa. But nobody connected Grogram with the Feringee who danced.

But another man was captured who told a similar tale; and then a Greek trader, turned Mohammedan to save his skin, who had made good his escape from the Mahdi's camp. He swore to having seen this man as he put in one evening at a Nile-bank village in a native dhow. He was dressed in an ancient khaki tunic and a loin-cloth; he was bare-legged, shoeless, and his hair was long over his shoulders and plastered thick with mud. No, he did not look in the least like a British soldier, though he danced as soldiers sometimes did beside the camp-fires.

Three natives who were with him played fifes while the Feringee danced, and one man beat a drum. Yes, the tunes were English tunes, though very badly played; he had heard them before, and recognized them. No, he could not hum them; he knew no music. Why had he not spoken to the man who danced? He had not dared. The man appeared to be a prisoner and so were the natives with him; the man had danced that evening until he could dance no longer, and then the Dervishes had beaten him with a koorbash for encouragement; the musicians had tried to interfere, and they had all been beaten and left lying there for dead. He was not certain, but he was almost certain they were dead before he came away.

Then, more than three years after Gordon died, there came another rumor, this time from close at hand—somewhere in the neutral desert zone that lay between the Dervish outpost and the part of Lower Egypt that England held. This time the dancer was reported to be dying, but the musicians were still with him. They got the name of the dancer this time; it was re-

ported to be Goglam, and though that was not at all a bad native guess for Grogram, nobody apparently noted the coincidence.

Men were too busy with their work; the rumor was only one of a thousand that filtered across the desert every month, and nobody remembered the non-commissioned officer who had left for Khartum with the First Egyptian Foot; they would have recalled the names of all the officers almost without an effort, but not Grogram's.

III

EGYPT was busy with the hum of building—empire-building under a man who knew his job. Almost the only game the Sirdar countenanced was polo, and that only because it kept officers and civilians fit. He gave them all the polo, though, that they wanted, and men grew keen on it, spent money on it, and, needless to say, grew extraordinarily proficient.

And with proficiency of course came competition—matches between regiments for the regimental cup, and finally the biggest event of the Cairo season, the match between the Civil Service and the Army of Occupation, or, as it was more usually termed, "The Army *vs.* the Rest." That was the one society event that the Sirdar made a point of presiding over in person.

He attended it in mufti always, but sat in the seat of honor, just outside the touchline, half way down the field; and behind him, held back by ropes, clustered the whole of Cairene society, on foot, on horseback and in dog-carts, buggies, gigs and every kind of carriage imaginable. Opposite, and at either end, the garrison lined up—all the British and native troops rammed in together; and the native population crowded in between them wherever they could find standing-room.

It was the one event of the year for which all Egypt, Christian and Mohammedan, took a holiday. Regimental bands were there to play before the game and between the chukkers, and nothing was left undone that would in any way tend to make the event spectacular.

Two games had been played since the cup had been first presented by the Khedive, and honors lay even—one match for the Army and one for the Civil Service. So on the third anniversary feeling ran fairly high. It ran higher still when half time was called and honors still lay even at the goal all; to judge by the excitement of the crowd, a stranger might have guessed that polo was the most important thing in Egypt. The players rode off to the pavilion for the half-time interval, and the infantry band that came out on to the field was hard put to it to drown the noise of conversation and laughter and argument. At that minute there was surely nothing in the world to talk about but polo.

But suddenly the band stopped playing, as suddenly as if the music were a concrete thing and had been severed with an ax. The Sirdar turned his head suddenly and gazed at one corner of the field, and the noise of talking ceased—not so suddenly as the music had done, for not everybody could see what was happening at first—but dying down gradually and fading away to nothing as the amazing thing came into view.

It was a detachment of five men—a drummer and three fifes, and one other man who marched behind them—though he scarcely resembled a man. He marched, though, like a British soldier.

He was ragged—they all were—dirty and unkempt. He seemed very nearly starved, for his bare legs were thinner than a mummy's; round his loins was a native loincloth, and his hair was plastered down with mud like a religious fanatic's. His only other garment was a tattered khaki tunic that might once have been a soldier's, and he wore no shoes or sandals of any kind.

He marched, though, with a straight back and his chin up, and anybody who was half observant might have noticed that he was marching two paces right flank rear; it is probable, though, that in the general amazement, nobody did notice it.

As the five debouched upon the polo-ground, four of them abreast, the one behind issued a sharp command, the right-hand man thumped his drum, and a wail proceeded from the fifes. They swung into a regimental quickstep now, and the wail grew louder, rising and falling fitfully and distinctly keeping time with the drum.

Then the tune grew recognizable. The crowd listened now in awestruck silence. The five approaching figures were grotesque enough to raise a laugh and the tune was grotesquer, and more pitiable still; but there was something electric in the atmos-

phere that told of tragedy, and not even the natives made a sound as the five marched straight across the field to where the Sirdar sat beneath the Egyptian flag.

Louder and louder gew the tune as the fifes warmed up to it; louder thumped the drum. It was flat, and notes were missing here and there. False notes appeared at unexpected intervals, but the tune was unmistakable. "The Campbells Are Coming! Hurrah! Hurrah!" wailed the three fifes, and the five men marched to it as no undrilled natives ever did.

"Halt!" ordered the man behind, when the strange cortège had reached the Sirdar; and his "Halt!" rang out in good clean military English.

"Front!" he ordered, and they "fronted" like a regiment. "Right dress!" They were in line already, but they went through the formality of shuffling their feet. "Eyes front!" The five men faced the Sirdar, and no one breathed. "General salute—pre-sent arms!"

They had not arms. The band stood still at attention. The fifth man—he of the bare legs and plastered hair—whipped his right hand to his forehead in regulation military salute—held it there for the regulation six seconds, swaying as he did so and tottering from the knees, then whipped it to his side again and stood at rigid attention. He seemed able to stand better that way, for his knees left off shaking.

"Who are you?" asked the Sirdar then.

"The First Egyptian Foot, sir."

The crowd behind was leaning forward, listening; those that had been near enough to hear that gasped. The Sirdar's face changed suddenly to the look of cold indifference behind which a certain type of Englishman hides his emotion.

Then came the time-honored question, prompt as the ax of a guillotine—inevitable as Fate itself:

"Where are your colors?"

The fifth man—he who had issued the commands—fumbled with his tunic. The buttons were missing, and the front of it was fastened up with string; his fingers seemed to have grown feeble; he plucked at it, but it would not come undone.

"Where are——"

The answer to that question should be like an echo, and nobody should need to ask it twice. But the string burst suddenly, and the first time of asking sufficed. The ragged, unkempt, long-haired mummy undid his tunic and pulled it open.

"Here, sir!" he answered.

The colors, blood-soaked, torn—unrecognizable almost—were round his body! As the ragged tunic fell apart, the colors fell with it; Grogram caught them, and stood facing the Sirdar with them in his hand. His bare chest was scarred with half-healed wounds and criss-crossed with the marks of floggings, and his skin seemed to be drawn tight as a mummy's across his ribs. He was a living skeleton!

The Sirdar sprang to his feet and raised his hat; for the colors of a regiment are second, in holiness, to the Symbols of the Church. The watching, listening crowd followed suit; there was a sudden rustling as a sea of hats and helmets rose and descended.

The band of four, that had stood in stolid silence while all this was happening, realized that the moment was auspicious to play their other tune.

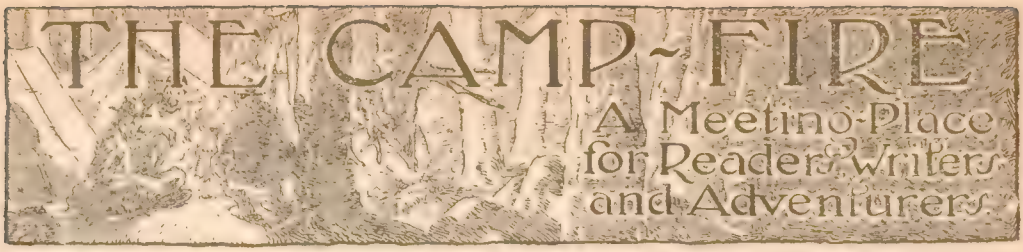
They had only one other, and they had played "The Campbells Are Coming" across the polo-field; so up went the fifes, "Bang!" went the drum, and, "God, Save Our Gracious Queen" wailed the three in concert, while strong men hid their faces and women sobbed.

Grogram whipped his hand up to the answering salute, faced the crowd in front of him for six palpitating seconds, and fell dead at the Sirdar's feet.

And so they buried him; his shroud was the flag that had flown above the Sirdar at that ever-memorable match, and his soul went into the regiment.

They began recruiting it again next day round the blood-soaked colors he had carried with him, and the First Egyptian Foot did famously at the Atbara and Omdurman. They buried him in a hollow square formed by massed brigades, European and native regiments alternating, and saw him on his way with twenty-one parting volleys, instead of the regulation five. His tombstone is a monolith of rough-hewn granite, tucked away in a quiet corner of the European graveyard at Cairo—quiet and inconspicuous as Grogram always was—but the truth is graven on it in letters two inches deep:

HERE LIES A MAN



THOUGH known from his books and from stories in other magazines, Irving Crump this month has his first story in *Adventure*. So, by our Camp-Fire custom, he introduces himself:

During periods varying from a few months to a score at a time, I wandered through the inside and outside of New York and other cities as a reporter. The *American* was both my starting and stopping point in newspaper work.

By instinct I am a wanderer, I guess. I have helped fight a Fundy gale on the salmon boats; got myself "mucked up" from heels to head with the St. Croix sardiners, been sealing with the Passamaquoddies in a seventeen-foot canoe among the ice-floes, and I have done a number of other equally foolish, though none the less interesting, things. Fortunately, Mrs. Crump is of the same inclination. She can handle a rifle as well as I can and can outrun me in a day on snow-shoes.

So far as *real* adventure goes, I think the nearest approach to one I ever experienced was when we tried to run a rapids in a canoe at eleven o'clock at night with a sick man in the bottom of the craft. How we ever got through I do not know. I guess we all thought that every minute was going to be the last, and when we reached the doctor he had three patients instead of one.

About "Danny and Number Nine" there is very little that I can say except that he experienced the combined adventures of two men I know, one an engineer and the other a filibuster and one-time friend of Dynamite Johnny O'Brien. Of course I had the pleasure of adding the trimmings.

YOU know that the American Legion, suggested and first organized by this magazine, has, after two years of activity, been taken over by the United States Government. It remains to be seen just what the Administration will do with the 25,000 picked and trained men we have turned over to it.

At this writing things promise well. From the first it was our hope and intention that ultimately the Government would officially take over the Legion's work and make it a permanent part of the Government machinery. Our complete card records were turned over by us to the Secretary of War and by him to the Council of National Defense. The following letter from this last body to Alexander M. White, formerly president of the Legion, has been received and shows an interest on the part of the Council that is likely to bring efficient results:

COUNCIL OF NATIONAL DEFENSE
WASHINGTON

January 16, 1917.

DEAR MR. WHITE:

I wish to acknowledge receipt of the card records of the American Legion. The Council of National Defense has only recently been organized, but one of the matters we should like to take up promptly is the question of the best utilization of the work done by the American Legion. So far our studies have led us to believe that the records can best be used by the War Department in building up the officers' reserve corps and the enlisted reserve corps. We would like to know whether there are any objections to the records being so used and especially we should like the suggestions of the American Legion as to how they believe the records can be utilized in a way that would be of most value to the Government and yet consistent with the intents and desires of your organization.

Very sincerely yours,
(Signed) W. S. GIFFORD, Director.

Naturally the former officials of the Legion are co-operating to the fullest extent and we hope eventually to see the Legion occupying a place that will make us of the Camp-Fire particularly proud.

AT THE Camp-Fire several months ago I gave you a letter from a "man in the Philippines" who wrote that, because of the Government's ingratitude and injustices to him and other ex-soldiers, its dangerous discrimination in favor of foreigners in the matter of civil appointments in the Islands, and similar faults alleged by him, he was not willing to serve the country again even if war should come. In a little article, "Are You a Quitter?" I took exception to that attitude of mind and three

of you have written objecting to what I said. I think they would have felt no objections if I had succeeded in making myself clear, and probably I failed to be clear to some others of you besides these three. A few words will straighten things out.

In the first place, not having intimate knowledge of Philippine conditions, I did not dispute his charges. I did know that the *kind* of thing he complains about is to be found all over the United States in its city, county, State and national governments. To me the man in the Philippines seemed merely a chance example of all the rest of us Americans, one of us who had spoken what many of us feel.

MY ONE and only point was, and is, that when we find this kind of rottenness it is our duty as citizens to do what we can to clean it out. If we merely complain and sulk about it, we are quitters. That is true and I stand by it. I am even sure that you agree with me—in theory.

But, when it comes to practise, I know in advance what many of you will say. You'll complain and swear and growl and then add, "But what can *I* do about it?" Well, I can tell you what you *are* if you say that. You are a quitter.

And it was *you*, not the man from the Philippines, that I was talking to. He probably has more excuse for quitting than most of the rest of us. I think very likely he is a better citizen than I am; certainly he has given our country more direct service than I have, and he seems to have suffered more at her hands. I don't know how much, or how little, *you* have done for our country, but if you are only complaining about her faults and weaknesses and not doing what *you* can to set them right, then you are a quitter; then, being a poor citizen, you yourself are one of our country's weaknesses.

ONE of the three who wrote to me explained at great length that I was crazy to expect any ordinary citizen to do anything toward better government when the politicians controlled all the machinery of elections and government. I hate to call any of you names, for I like to think of you as my friends, but that man is a sheep. The trouble is that most of us Americans are sheep. That's how the politicians get away with it.

I used to be a sheep myself—was a sheep most of my life. So I know how sheep-Americans feel, talk and act. Or, rather, fail to act.

NO, I'M not inciting to revolution. Quite the opposite. It's a matter of quiet, persistent effort under the law, an every-day matter without any particular "glory" or heroics about it. It isn't a matter of election-day only. Nor of Fourth of July. Military service is only sometimes a part of it. It isn't any of the shop-worn issues like Free Trade *vs.* Protection. It's merely the duty of making everything pertaining to our government clean and honest. We all know what clean and honest mean. And we all can make our government clean and honest—if we try.

It *is* a government of the people. No force can withstand the power of the people—if they really exert their power. And it doesn't have to be exerted by means of a bloody ax.

CONSIDER. If ninety-nine million Americans allow one million Americans to control the entire machinery of government and them themselves, aren't these ninety-nine million sheep-Americans getting just what they deserve? And if they only complain and grumble about it, what good will that do them? Even a sheep will complain if you treat him badly enough. But nobody cares very much what happens to a sheep. Or to a quitter. And neither a sheep nor a quitter gets much of anywhere.

HELP yourselves. And us. Problem:—What way of handling serials suits most of you best? That is, do you prefer the brief and unsatisfactory synopses in small type that are usually used for giving a reader the first part of the plot so he can read the new instalment understandingly? Or the plan *Adventure* has followed of recent months, giving a rather lengthy synopsis in the same type as the story itself and in regular story-form, style similar to that of the tale itself? Or the plan we present in this issue for the first time—same as the preceding but in smaller type?

It's a whole lot more complicated problem than appears, but we'll skip the details. All we're trying to do is to fix it the way that suits our readers best. Instead of

guessing at it, we're asking you. If you have any suggestions, send them in.

WE'VE had a number of interesting letters from our comrade, Edmond C. C. Genet, but none more interesting than this one.

YOU last heard of me from Buc, the starting point of my aerial training. I finished there on September 3d and received my military pilot's license with an excellent record to back it up. From there I went to Pau, in the southwestern section of France, where is located the finest and largest aviation school in the country. In record time (scarcely eighteen days) I learned to pilot and perfected myself on the famous little "*avion de chasse*," the Nieuport, which I am to pilot at the front, and then came here the third of October in order to learn to shoot machine-guns. All pilots of monoplane machines necessarily have to run their own machine-guns and they have to come here for that part of their aviation instruction. We have all sorts of target-practise here—shooting from hydroplanes and fast motor-boats on the big lake beside which the school is located (Cazaux Lake is southwest of Bordeaux near the coast), and there is also a range along the shore. The targets are small gas-balloons either stationery on the surface of the water or loose and floating through the air. It's all intensely interesting work and exceptionally novel.

THIS week I finish and expect to go to Pau again on the first of next month after spending a few days' vacation in Paris. Pau will be my final stage of instruction—three or four weeks in the school of aerial combat. It's the most dangerous of the instructions, as one has to perform all the possible stunts of aerial maneuvering, such as looping-the-loop, diving vertically several hundred meters, turning over sideways, and a host of other harebrained tricks. If a pilot gets away alive and partially sane from that school he surely is competent to go to the front to do his little bit against the Boche airmen. All aviators, I'm certain, are never completely sane.

Our *escadrille* has lost two more of its best men lately—Rockwell and Norman Prince, the originator of the *escadrille*. One of our men, Lufberry, is now one of the "aces" of the French aerial service, having already brought down five enemy avions. We're mighty proud of him and decidedly mournful at the loss of the others.

THERE'S a possibility of my going to Rumania after I complete my training, instead of fighting on this western front. I volunteered about a month ago to go when a call came from the Minister of War, but thus far have no definite knowledge of being accepted. I'm mighty keen on going, though, as I believe it will open up excellent chances of rapid promotion. I would most probably be attached to the Russian western corps and come under the eyes of the majority of the Allied powers fighting on that front. I've always wished to see the war as it is being fought out down in those exciting parts anyway, so I am hoping for the opportunity to go.

I get letters occasionally from various of my old boyhood chums who are now in their late teens and early twenties and all in hustling jobs of one sort or another, but, believe me, I wouldn't change places with any of them for anything. . . . . This is *some* sporty game.

ROBIN ANDERSON follows our Camp-Fire custom, and rises to introduce himself to us on the occasion of his first story in *Adventure*, a tale of the Philippines:

I am probably eligible for your cheerful gathering, as I have made forty-three trips by Atlantic and Pacific and other less known oceans. In fourteen years spent between China, Japan and the Philippines one must of necessity encounter every sort of adventure and experience.

THE whole wonderland of the Philippines is a great, unopened book of romance and adventure, but one can *know* it only by living there through hot weather, typhoon-time and the marvelous, balmy four months of perfect weather which endure from November until March. The tourists who flash through Manila for a few days, on their way from Japan to India, can never realize the infinite variety of scenery, peoples and curious customs which exist all along from Mindanao to Baguio. There is the strange, unusual condition of circumstances which always must exist where palm and pine commingle.

It was my good fortune to go to Manila with the American Army in '99, when the Spanish order of things still prevailed and American rule had not been firmly established. The transition from a sleepy Spanish town to a sort of hustling, tropicalized New York City has been most interesting to watch.

IN MY story, "Why Dex Weaver Hated Father Mullay," the two principal characters are facts, not fiction. Both, under other names, are well known and popular men in Manila and the Bengnet country. A person who has passed a season in Baguio will recognize *Dex Weaver;* and *Father Mullay* is known and loved everywhere. They met exactly as the tale describes, and *Weaver* refused to make friends with the priest in quite the manner and with the same words as I have recounted. He also avoided the priest for a long period of time; and ultimately they became the close friends they are to-day—and any one can see them riding over the Baguio hills together whenever the priest makes a journey into the mountains of the North country.

I have tried to make it all as clear as it is to me—the picturesque life of the Baguio miners, the toilful, sturdy Igorots, the curious ascent of the Zig-Zag, which as an achievement of engineering must be mentioned as one of the marvels of the country.

There is no end to the possibility for adventure over there—no limit to the material for tales quite out of the ordinary. But climate and conditions are so antipathetic to the general run of human kind, and the Philippines are so far away, that it will be a long time before their great possibilities, commercial and romantic, will be appreciated.

FROM your many past expressions of opinion I know that practically all of you will rejoice that the girls no longer appear on our covers. Only recently were the magazine's covers put under the jurisdiction of my department and my first act was to say an untender good-by to these ladies. You will like our new brand of cover better. I'm hoping, indeed, that you'll like it very much.

ARTHUR SULLIVANT HOFFMAN.

ADVENTURE'S FREE SERVICES AND ADDRESSES

These services of *Adventure's* are free to *any one*. They involve much time, work and expense on our part, but we offer them gladly and ask in return only that you *read and observe the simple rules*, thus saving needless delay and trouble for you and us. The whole spirit of this magazine is one of friendliness. No formality between editors and readers. Whenever we *can* help you we're ready and willing to try.

Identification Cards

Free to any reader. Just send us (1) your name and address, (2) name and address of party to be notified, (3) a stamped and self-addressed return envelope.

Each card bears this inscription, each printed in English, French, Spanish, German, Portuguese, Dutch, Italian, Arabic, Chinese, Russian, and Japanese:

"In case of death or serious emergency to bearer, address serial number of this card, care of *Adventure*, New York, stating full particulars, and friends will be notified."

In our office, under each serial number, will be registered the name of bearer and of one friend, with permanent address of each. No name appears on the card. Letters will be forwarded to friend, unopened by us. Names and addresses treated as confidential. We assume no other obligations. Cards not for business identification. Cards furnished free, *provided stamped and addressed envelope accompanies application.* We reserve the right to use our own discretion in all matters pertaining to these cards.

Later we may furnish a metal card or tag. If interested in metal cards, say so on a *post-card—not* in a letter. No obligation entailed. These post-cards, filed, will guide us as to demand and number needed.

A moment's thought will show the value of this system of card-identification for any one, whether in civilization or out of it. Remember to furnish stamped and addressed envelope and to *give in full the names and addresses of self and friend or friends when applying.*

Mail Address and Forwarding Service

This office, assuming no responsibility, will be glad to act as a forwarding address for its readers or to hold mail till called for, provided necessary postage is supplied.

Back Issues of *Adventure*

A free department for the benefit of those readers who wish to buy or sell back copies of this magazine.

Our own supply of old issues is exhausted back of 1915; even 1915 is partly gone. Readers report that *Adventures* can almost never be found at second-hand book-stalls. Our office files are, of course, complete and we do not buy back copies or act as agents for them.

Want: All issues from Vol. 1 to May, 1916. State price. —GEO. HIGHHOUSE, Box 74, Mercer, N. D.

To Sell: 1911, except Jan., May, Sept.; 1912, all; 1913, all; 1914, Jan., Sept., Oct., Nov., Dec.; 1915, Jan. through Aug.; 1916, Jan. through June—LEWIS FARRINGTON, 402 Nostrand Place, Richmond Hill, L. I., N. Y.

Want: All issues of 1910 to 1913 inclusive. State price; carriage paid by me. Because of long distance, money is deposited with A. S. Hoffman, care *Adventure;* communicate with him, not me.—DR. H. LISTER, Cobargo, New South Wales, Australia.

To Sell: 1914, March to Dec.; 1915, all, except Feb.: 1916, all except Sept. Five cents and carriage.—ALFRED C. BOWMAN, Room 25, Brush St. Sta., Detroit, Mich.

Manuscripts

Glad to look at any manuscript. We have no "regular staff" of writers. A welcome for new writers. *It is not necessary to write asking to submit your work.*

When submitting a manuscript, if you write a letter concerning it, enclose it *with* the manuscript; do *not* send it under separate cover. Enclose stamped and addressed envelope for return. All manuscripts should be typewritten, double-spaced, with wide margins, not rolled, name and address on first page. We assume no risk for manuscripts or illustrations submitted, but use all due care while they are in our hands. Payment on acceptance.

We want only clean stories. Sex, morbid, "problem," psychological and supernatural stories barred. Use only a very few fact-articles. Can not furnish or suggest collaborators. Use fiction of almost any length.

Expeditions and Employment

While we should like to be of aid in these matters, experience has shown that it is not practicable.

Addresses

ADVENTURERS' CLUB—No connection with this magazine, but data will be furnished by us. Can join only by attending a meeting of an existing chapter or starting a new chapter as provided in the Club's rules.

ORDER OF THE RESTLESS—Organizing to unite for fellowship all who feel the wanderlust. Entirely separate from Adventurers' Club, but, like it, first suggested in this magazine, though having no connection with it aside from our friendly interest. Address WAYNE EBERLY, 542 Engineers Bldg., Cleveland, O., in charge of preliminary organizing.

CAMP-FIRE—Any one belongs who wishes to.

NATIONAL SCHOOL CAMP ASS'N—Military and industrial training and camps for boys 12 or over. Address 1 Broadway, New York City.

HIGH-SCHOOL VOLUNTEERS OF THE U. S.—A similar organization coöperating with the N. S. C. A. (above). Address EVERYBODY'S, Spring and Macdougal, New York City.

RIFLE CLUBS—Address Nat. Rifle Ass'n of America, 1108 Woodward Bldg., Washington, D. C.

(*See also under "Standing Information" in "Ask Adventure."*)

General Questions from Readers

In addition to our free service department "Ask Adventure" on the pages following, *Adventure* can sometimes answer other questions within our general field. When it can, it will. Expeditions and employment excepted.

Missing Friends or Relatives

Our free service department "Lost Trails" in the pages following, though frequently used in cases where detective agencies, newspapers, and all other methods have failed, or for finding people long since dead, has located one out of every six or seven inquired for. Except in case of relatives, inquiries from one sex to the other are barred.

Remember

Magazines are made up ahead of time. An item received today is too late for the current issue or the one—or possibly two—following it.

Ask Adventure

A Free Question and Answer Service Bureau of Information on Outdoor Life and Activities Everywhere and Upon the Various Commodities Required Therein. Conducted for ADVENTURE MAGAZINE by a Staff of Experts.

QUESTIONS should be sent, not to this office, but direct to the expert in charge of the department in whose field it falls. So that service may be as prompt as possible, he will answer you by mail direct. But he will also send to us a copy of each question and answer, and from these we shall select those of most general interest and publish them each month in this department, thus making it itself an exceedingly valuable and standing source of practical information. Unless otherwise requested, inquirer's name and town are printed with question; street numbers not given.

When you ask for *general* information on a given district or subject the expert will probably give you some valuable general pointers and refer you to books or to local or special sources of information.

Our experts will in all cases answer to the best of their ability, using their own discretion in all matters pertaining to their departments subject only to our general rules for "Ask Adventure," but neither they nor the magazine assumes any responsibility beyond the moral one of trying to do the best that is possible. These experts have been chosen by us not only for their knowledge and experience but for their integrity and reliability. We have emphatically assured each of them that his advice or information is not to be affected in any way by whether a given commodity is or is not advertised in this magazine.

1. **Service free to anybody, but no question answered unless stamped and addressed envelope is enclosed.**
2. **Send each question direct to the expert in charge of the particular department whose field covers it. Do NOT send questions to this magazine.**
3. **No reply will be made to requests for partners, for financial backing, or for chances to join expeditions. "Ask Adventure" covers business and work opportunities, but only if they are outdoor activities, and only in the way of general data and advice. It is in no sense an employment bureau.**
4. **Make your questions definite and specific. State your wants exactly. Explain your case sufficiently to guide the expert you question.**
5. **Send no question until you have read very carefully the exact ground covered by the particular expert in whose department it seems to belong.**

1. Islands and Coasts

CAPTAIN A. E. DINGLE, care Authors' League of America, Aeolian Hall, New York. Islands of Indian and Atlantic oceans; the Mediterranean; Cape Horn and Magellan Straits. Also temporarily covering South American coast from Valparaiso south around the Cape and up to the River Plate. Ports, trade, peoples, travel.

2. The Sea

FREDERICK WILLIAM WALLACE, *Canadian Fisherman*, 35 St. Alexander St., Montreal, Can. ★ Covering ships, seamen and shipping, nautical history, seamanship, navigation, yachting; commercial fisheries of North America; marine bibliography of U. S. and British Empire; *especially*, seafaring on fishing-vessels of the North Atlantic and Pacific banks, small-boat sailing, and old-time shipping and seafaring.

3. Eastern U. S. Part 1

RAYMOND S. SPEARS, Little Falls, N. Y. Covering Mississippi, Ohio, Tennessee and Hudson valleys; Great Lakes, Adirondacks, Chesapeake Bay; river, lake and road travel; game, fish and woodscraft; furs, fresh-water pearls, herbs, and their markets.

4. Eastern U. S. Part 2

HAPSBURG LIEBE, Johnson City, Tenn. Covering Tennessee, Alabama, Mississippi, and N. and S. Carolina and Georgia except the Atlantic seaboard. Hunting, fishing, camping; logging, lumbering, sawmilling, saws.

5. Western U. S. Part 1

E. E. HARRIMAN, 2336 W. 23d St., Los Angeles, Calif. Covering California, Oregon, Washington, Utah, Nevada, Arizona. Game, fur, fish; camp, cabin; mines, minerals; mountains.

6. Western U. S. Part 2

JOSEPH MILLS HANSON, Yankton, S. Dak. Covering North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska, Iowa, Kansas, Missouri. Hunting, fishing, travel. *Especially* early history of Missouri valley.

7. North American Snow Countries. Part 1

C. L. GILMAN, 708 Oneida Bldg., Minneapolis, Minn. Covering Minnesota, Wisconsin, Michigan, Manitoba, a strip of Ontario between Minn. and C. P. R'y. Canoes and snow-shoes; methods and materials of Summer and Winter subsistence, shelter and travel, for recreation or business.

8. North American Snow Countries. Part 2

S. E. SANGSTER ("Canuck"), L. B. 393, Ottawa, Canada. ★ Covering Height of Land and northern parts of Quebec and Ontario (except strip between Minn. and C. P. R'y); southeastern parts of Ungava and Keewatin. Trips for sport, canoe routes, big game, fish, fur; equipment; Summer, Autumn and Winter outfits; Indian life and habits; Hudson's Bay Co. posts; minerals, timber; customs regulations.

9. North American Snow Countries. Part 3

GEORGE L. CATTON, Gravenhurst, Muskoka, Ont., Canada. ★ Covering southern Ontario and Georgian Bay. Fishing, hunting, trapping, canoeing.

10. North American Snow Countries. Part 4

ED. L. CARSON, Clear Lake, Wash. Covering Yukon, British Columbia and Alberta including Peace River district to Great Slave Lake. Outfits and equipment, guides, big game; minerals, forest, prairie; travel; customs regulations.

11. North American Snow Countries. Part 5

THEODORE S. SOLOMONS, 805 Jackson St., Santa Clara, Calif. Covering Alaska. Life and travel: boats, packing, back-packing, traction, transport, routes; equipments, clothing, food; physics, hygiene; mountain work.

12. Central America

EDGAR YOUNG, Sayville, N. Y. Covering Canal Zone, Panama, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Honduras, British Honduras, Salvador, Guatemala. Travel, customs, language, game, local conditions, minerals, trading.

13. The Balkans

ARTHUR D. HOWDEN SMITH, *Evening Post*, 20 Vesey St., New York City. Covering Rumania, Bulgaria, Greece, Serbia, Montenegro, Albania, Turkey (in Europe); travel, sport, customs, language, local conditions, markets, industries.

14. Asia, Southern

GORDON MCCREAGH, 21 Nagle Ave., Inwood, New York City. Covering Red Sea, Persian Gulf, India, Tibet, Burma, Western China, Siam, Andamans, Malay States, Borneo, the Treaty Ports; hunting, trading, traveling.

15. Russia and Eastern Siberia

A. M. LOCHWITZKY (Lieut.-Col. I. R. A., Ret.), Adventurers' Club, 26 N. Dearborn St., Chicago. Covering Petrograd and its province; Finland, Northern Caucasus; Primorsk District, Island of Sakhalin; travel, hunting, fishing; explorations among native tribes; markets, trade, curios.

16. Africa. Part 1

CAPTAIN FREDERICK J. FRANKLIN, Adventurers' Club, 26 N.

★ *(Enclose addressed envelope with 3 cents in stamps NOT attached.)*

Dearborn St., Chicago. Covering Cape Colony, Transvaal, Orange River Colony, Natal, Rhodesia; routes, outfits, guides, expenses.

17. Africa. Part 2

THOMAS S. MILLER, 1604 Chapin Ave., Burlingame, Calif. Covering the Gold, Ivory and Fever Coasts of West Africa, the Niger River from the delta to Jebba, Northern Nigeria. Canoeing, labor, trails, trade, expenses, outfitting, flora; tribal histories, witchcraft, savagery.

STANDING INFORMATION

For general information on U. S. and its possessions, write Sup't of Public Documents, Wash., D. C., for catalog of all Government publications.

For the Philippines and Porto Rico, the Bureau of Insular Affairs, War Dep't, Wash., D. C.

For Alaska, the Alaska Bureau, Chamber of Commerce, Central Bldg., Seattle, Wash.

For Hawaii, Hawaii Promotion Committee, Chamber of Commerce, Honolulu, H. I. Also, Dep't of the Interior, Wash., D. C.

For Cuba, Bureau of Information, Dep't of Agri., Com., and Labor, Havana, Cuba.

For Central and South America, John Barrett, Dir. Gen., Pan-American Union, Wash., D. C.

For R. N. W. M. P., Comptroller Royal Northwest Mounted Police, Ottawa, Can., or Commissioner, R. N. W. M. P., Regina, Sask. Only unmarried British subjects, age 22 to 30, above 5 ft. 8 in. and under 175 lbs., accepted.

For Canal Zone, the Panama Canal, Wash., D. C.

For U. S., its possessions and most foreign countries, the Dep't of Com., Wash., D. C.

NOW that there's been time for questions from readers to reach Department Editors and for the answers to a few of them to be published in this issue, you can see the actual, practical working of "Ask Adventure." Judging from the number of questions already received, some of the Departments are likely to be worked pretty hard, so please send in no questions unless you really need to have them answered. *And*, before sending in any questions, please read all the rules and also make sure of *just* what ground each department covers.

There are five new Departments since last month. As space permits, we'll publish each new Editor's account of himself and his experience; also a sample question and answer of his own covering in advance one of the subjects most likely to be asked about in his field.—A. S. H.

Question:—"Please tell me what you can about the Texas Rangers, what pay they get, and how long they have to serve?"—LIONEL E. PITTS, Jackman, Me.

Answer, by Dep't 5, E. E. Harriman:—When I was in touch with the service a few years ago, the pay was only about forty dollars a month. The term of enlistment, I am informed by a former Ranger, was three years. The requirements are as follows: Each Ranger must be an expert shot with both rifle and revolver. He must be able to stick on the hurricane deck of any riding animal he comes in contact with. He must have endurance of a high order. He must be a man of temperate habits. He must be amenable to discipline. He must be willing to take the Ranger's oath never to give up his weapons. Courage of the highest possible order is as much a requisite as arms and hands. He must be willing and capable to face odds of the gravest sort, without any tremors. For further information address Commanding Officer, Texas Rangers, Austin, Texas. I think this will bring you any information I may have omitted. As my information is several years old there may have been changes in pay and enlistment, but I think this is fairly accurate.

Question:—"I am interested in fur-farming and would like to know which section of the country would be best suited for this undertaking and if you can tell me what books I can get on the subject and if it would be an expensive undertaking?—A. GLANZER, Altoona, Pa.

Answer, by Dep't 7, C. L. Gilman:—Pennsylvania was once a good trapping-ground. This would indicate that conditions in your own State today are favorable to fur-farming. First consult your State Game and Fish Commission regarding the kinds of fur-bearers indigenous to your State and the regions where they are found. The *Hunter-Trader-Trapper* magazine, Columbus, Ohio, contains much information on fur-farming and publishes, I think, a hand-book on fur-farming. *Field and Stream*, 34th Street and 8th Avenue, New York City, ran a series of articles on the subject by Ernest Seton-Thompson about two years ago. Ask them if they can supply back numbers or if this stuff is in book-form. Incidentally look up "game bird farming," a more profitable proposition than fur-farming alone. The Hercules Powder Co., Wilmington, Del., issues a booklet on this; address the "Game Breeding Department." With regard to cost—it depends altogether on what you want to raise. In general the more valuable the fur, the more expensive the plant required. I would commend to your consideration the raising of muskrats. The swamp land needed for this is cheap, the fur a staple article of commerce and the animal the easiest of all fur-bearers to farm. By raising mallard ducks in connection with the "rats" you could protect yourself just as the farmer does, by a diversity of crops.

With regard to returns, the biennial report of the Minnesota Game and Fish Commission which now lies on my desk states that one operator in Minnesota reports $12,000 in sales of foxes while another sold $6,635 worth of skunk.

Question:—"Information wanted regarding seafaring life. Am a British subject, sixteen years old. Would like to get a position as a cabin-boy on some transatlantic liner and try to forge ahead from that position."—J. J. WOGAN, N. Y.

Answer, by Dep't No. 2, Mr. Wallace:—If you wish to become an officer or master of a ship, you could not start as a cabin-boy on a transatlantic liner. Cabin-boys on these ships are juniors in the Steward's Department. If you wish to enter this branch of seafaring life, apply to the superintendent steward of any of the steamship lines sailing out of New York. If you wish to go as an engineer, you would require to serve an apprenticeship in a shipyard where marine engines are made, before you could go to sea. Apply to the superintendents, New York Shipbuilding Co., Camden, N. J.; Shooter's Island Shipyard Co., Shooter's Island, N. Y.; McNeil Engine Works, Brooklyn, N. Y.; T. S. Marvel Shipbuilding Co., Newburgh, N. Y.; William Cramp & Sons, Philadelphia, Pa.; Fore River Shipbuilding Co., Quincy, Mass., etc.

For the navigating offices, you would require to go to sea as a ship's boy, ordinary seaman or cadet at your present age. Apprentices are taken on British ships, sail and steam, for a premium ranging

from $250 to $500 for the three or four year term of service. Apply to Secretary, Merchant Service Guild, Liverpool, England, for particulars of companies carrying cadets or apprentices. You might also try local steamship and sailing ship owners in New York. The cheapest way is for you to ship as a boy or ordinary seaman on a schooner in the coasting trade. There are plenty sailing out of New York. One or two trips will teach you the ropes and you can sign on for deep-water voyages in sail or steam. Pay attention and study seamanship and navigation while at sea. By the time you are twenty, you should be able to go up for your second mate's license. The U. S. Navy offers good opportunities for smart boys, but as you are a British subject, they may not accept you. The Canadian Navy is signing on boys at present; pay 50 cents a day and all found. Apply Chief Naval Officer, Dockyard, Halifax, N. S.

Sample Question:—"My wife and I want to see one Hudson's Bay Post before they pass into history and I would like to know if you consider it practical for us to make a canoe trip of ten to twelve days off the new Transcontinental line and visit the Post at Grand Lake, we to bring nothing with us save our personal effects and hiring everything at our starting point."

Answer, by Dep't No. 8, S. E. Sangster:—Replying to your query of the 20th inst. regarding a projected cruise from the T. C. Ry. to the H. B. Post at Grand Lake Victoria. You can now readily make this trip with easy going, in twelve or fourteen days out from Nottaway Station. Canoes, guides and complete outfit et al. can be had here and I shall be happy to arrange all details for you, if desired. The route is south up the Bell and through the chain of lakes over the H. of L. into G. L. Victoria. Best time to take trip would be August. There are some sixty Indians who make their headquarters at the Post, but generally there are not more than a few families there save when the Mission is on in June. It is a typical Post and would afford you what you desire to see as much as any would. Cruise is easy, quite suitable for your wife, if she is used to canoe travel. Portages are fair, one over H. of L. sometimes pretty wet, length 1½ miles. Fishing (G. N. pike and dore excellent); chance to see moose, possibly deer and all kinds of wild fowl and fur. Route via Toronto-Cochrane and East.

Sample Question:—"What is the favored method of hunting black bear in the mountains lying along the Tennessee-North Carolina line?"

Answer, by Dep't 4, Hapsburg Liebe:—The outsider who hunts bear in these mountains usually goes with a hillman who owns a pack of trained bear-dogs. Sometimes days elapse before a trail is found. Bear are found now only in the very wildest sections of these mountains. Mountaineers often trap for bear. They use a strong steel trap with a chain and a sort of grappling-hook attached. The hook impedes the bear's progress and leaves marks, thereby rendering it an easy matter to follow and kill bruin.

Sample Question:—"Are slavery and cannibalism still practised in West Africa?"

Answer, by Dep't No. 16, T. S. Miller:—Officially slavery and cannibalism are non-existent. But old customs die hard. In the immediate vicinity of the trading-stations and the headquarters of the residents, neither slaves nor human flesh-pots are much in evidence; but a little way back it is a different story. There are varying degrees of slavery in the hinterlands of West Africa; but nothing so cruel as the old slavery of the Southern States. In times of hunger Africans often voluntarily sell themselves into slavery, just as a hobo breaks a window to get into jail and eat. Then again, a powerful chief, say the Sultan of Bornu, has to be handled carefully, tradition and custom respected, the weaning from barbarism gradual. His slaves are his bank-account.

Cannibalism is more ugly, and more deeply rooted in superstition. When the captor thinks that in eating his prisoner he is digesting his victim's prowess and cunning it takes more than persuasion to stop the thing. Again, by eating the captives the victors are assured that the spirits of their victims are not left to roam around the world and make trouble for those who spilled their blood. With the Munchi people of the Pagan Belt cannibalism was a much more simple matter. When the king was asked why he ate human flesh, he answered, "Because it is salty." The Nigerian authorities put the Munchi on a salt bounty and thus put an end to cannibalism in that quarter.

I never heard of a white being killed for the flesh-pots. In fact, local superstition is strongly against such a contingency.

Sample Question:—"What practicable trip for sport with possible profit can be undertaken in the region abutting on the Magellan Straits? How can I get there? What outfit shall I take?"

Answer, by Dep't No. 1, Captain Dingle:—If you like hard-weather sailing, the chances for sport are excellent. You will combine the facility for reaching otherwise inaccessible points with the thrill of real sailorizing. If a land trip exclusively is desired, take steamer to Bahia Blanca, thence take small coasting steamer down to Santa Cruz, where horses and guides (guides are not essential, only advisable) can be got. If you wish to take a boat yourself through the Straits, that, too, can be secured very cheaply at Santa Cruz, and the small coasting sailing vessels are seaworthy enough for anything. In either case plenty of hunting can be reached, and with ordinary luck a jaguar or puma may be got. American ostrich and guanaco abound and are not difficult to hunt. The giant hare is plentiful and makes mighty fine stew.

From the seaboard of the Straits, good mountain climbing is handy, and, in the region north of Punta Arenas and east of the head of Last Hope Inlet, small gold-bearing streams are found in the hills. Of the natives met, the Tehuelches of the mainland, and the Onas and Yaghans of Terra del Fuego are most numerous. The first as a rule are harmless but cunning in a swapping of goods; the other two races are mean and unreliable to deal with, but are not very dangerous unless a mob of them get hold of a stray lone stranger.

As for outfit, the hunting kit you would use in Maine, or any of the northern States, is good. Extras consist of guanaco-lined coat and poncho, and leggins, all of which can best be procured in Santa Cruz. The rifle that is good enough for bear or deer will kill anything in Patagonia with few exceptions, and a duck gun will ensure a plentiful supply of water-fowl for the camp kettle.

LOST TRAILS

NOTE—We offer this department of the "Camp-Fire" free of charge to those of our readers who wish to get in touch again with old friends or acquaintances from whom the years have separated them. For the benefit of the friend you seek, *give your own name if possible.* All inquiries along this line, unless containing contrary instructions, will be considered as intended for publication in full with inquirer's name, in this department, at our discretion. We reserve the right, in case inquirer refuses his name, to substitute any numbers or other names, to reject any item that seems to us unsuitable, and to use our discretion in all matters pertaining to this department. Give also your own full address. We will, however, forward mail through this office, assuming no responsibility therefor. We have arranged with the Montreal *Star* to give additional publication in their "Missing Relative Column," weekly and daily editions, to any of our inquiries for persons last heard of in Canada.

BEAL, GEORGE HENRY; last heard of in No. Dakota in 1912. Light complexion, 34 years, 6 ft. Civil engineer. Was in Texas in 1913 and was commission man in Beech Grove, Ind., on construction of Big Four shops. Worked for a Mr. O'Neil there. Was in Portland Hotel fire in St. Louis, Mo., in 1909. Any information as to his whereabouts will be appreciated.—C. L. BARNARD, Box 354, Matthews, Ind.

CAMPBELL, WEBB; Co. C, 3d Reg. Wisconsin, Spanish-American War. Brakeman Omaha R. R. Co., between St. Paul and Duluth 1888-1892. Seen in Winnipeg, Canada, 1910, also Portland, Ore., 1914. Formerly lived in Hudson, St. Croix, Wis. Clerk, salesman, railroad man. Age 45 years, 5 ft. 8 in., 150 lbs., brown hair, blue eyes. Aged father and friends desire information.—Address L. S. WESTFALL, P. O. Box 720, Portland, Ore.

MACVICAR, J. F.; last seen by me in Wash., Kansas, June, 1916. Left New York with me on May 8, 1915, going West. Worked for Concordia Electric Light and Power Co. in the Summer and Fall of 1915. Through northern Kansas as lineman. Write your old Pal Peter, alias Peter Henry Jenkins of North Adams, as I have good news for you. Any information greatly appreciated.—Address PETER GRAF, 39 Willow Ave., Plainfield, N. J.

AMERICAN LEGION (of Canadian Expeditionary Force) Boys attention. Boys of the 213th Overseas Batt. C. E. F. Please state in *Adventure* if they come across this notice and give present address as I wish to correspond with them, especially boys of A Company or the Bugle or Drum Corps of Camp Borden.—Address JAMES D. JOHNSON, R. F. D., No. 2, Granville, O.

WILLIAMS, LEWIS or Bill; last heard of on the U. S. S. *Connecticut* as boatswain's mate. If Damora or Gairwold see this I would like to hear from them. I was with you on the U. S. S. *Oregon*, with you in 1915 at the Fair.—Address ALBERT E. HESS, 810 Motor Pl., Seattle, Wash.

STUART, FRANK WM.; "Scotsman." Carpenter. Last heard of in Butte, Mont., 1897, going Indian Terr. Any one knowing whereabouts write brother.—Address ROBERT STUART, 309 West 20th St., New York City, N. Y.

CROSSLEY, JOHN; sometimes known as "Sailor White." Middle-weight champion of Georgia. Would like to hear from any one knowing his whereabouts.—Address JOHN GREENWOOD, 31 School St., Sanford, Me.

SCHAFER, JACOB, my father, who was last heard of in 1902-1903 in Virginia or West Virginia, where he was engaged in coal mining. Any information concerning his whereabouts will be appreciated by his daughter.—MOLLY SCHAFER, care H. Brenner, 103 W. 127th St., New York City.

DICKESON, ARTHUR D. Heard of within the last five years as being in North Vancouver, B. C., in Alaska and also Montana. He is nicknamed "Slim" or "Swede," although he is of German descent. Slender, medium complexion, 6 ft. His sister inquires.—Address KATHERINE DICKESON, 1901 University Ave., S. E., Minneapolis, Minn.

RAND, FERRIS C. Left him in Jacksonville, Fla., Feb. 1916. Last heard of from Pocantico Hills, N. Y. in July 1916. Said he was going to Europe and promised to keep in touch with me. I called him "Tubby" because he was short and rather stout.—Address WILLIAM C. DOHERTY, 62 Osborne Terrace, East Springfield, Mass., care R. Higgins.

HONEY, J. T. Last heard of at San Antonio, Texas. Known as skipper cook in A Troop, 3d Cav., 1913. Old side kicker would like to hear from you. Important.—Address DAN KILROY, Oatman, Ariz.

RUSSEL, JOHN MACT. Last heard from in Fall of 1909 at Reno, Nevada. 67 years, was machinist by trade. Sister Mary would like to hear from you.—Address MRS. MARY R. CORRY, 1645 N. 29th St., Philadelphia, Pa.

MURPH, "KID" FRANK; was in Savanah, Ga., in the Winter of 1915-1916. Write your old pard "Wink." If in trouble and want money write.—Address A. F. WHIGAM, 173 Elm St., Yonkers, N. Y.

LINDSAY, ALFRED, last heard of was in Co. C, 7th Inf., New York, stationed at McAllen, Texas. Remember the "Maine" and Worcester Academy.—Address EVERETT K. GARDNER, Patten, Me.

BECKETT, HUGH (Curly); last heard from in Webb City, Mo., working in the mines. His brother would like to hear from him.—Address FRANK BECKETT, Gen. Del., Sioux City, Iowa.

ALLISON, BRUCE C. Formerly with H. A. Boedker Constr. Co. of Chicago.—Address LULAN M. KAIN, R. F. D. No. 2, Ashland, Ky.

RELATIVES of Benjamin Robinson, born in Canada (Montreal), came to Canada from Eng. about 1820 and went to Rochester, N. Y., about 1835 or 1840. Was a shoemaker and lived at his trade. Married at Rochester about 1860. In 1864 moved to Iowa. He had several brothers living in Canada or England. Dark hair, blue eyes, 180 lbs., 5 ft. 11 inches. Any information of relatives will be appreciated by his son.—Address R. B. ROBINSON, 5112 Vincent Ave., So. Minneapolis, Minn.

BRACKMAN, GUS; last heard from in New Orleans, La. Was in South Africa, also on H. M. S. S. *Manchester Port* in remount service with me. If this should reach Tommy Anderson, Top Sergeant, Co. F, 2d U. S. Inf. in Santiago, Cuba, please write me. Would like to get information of some of my old pals.—Address C. A. STANLEY, 642 Nerry St., Grand Rapids, Mich.

WEBER, FRED. We were together in the East and a little West. His old friend known as "Kid Carl" or "Mutt" would like to hear from him.—Address MATTHEW DUSHANE, 102 Lancaster St., Cohoes, N. Y.

FLYNN, MAURICE J. Formerly of Co. C, 10th Inf. Any one knowing his whereabouts please write.—Address F. WOLFGANG, Ravalli, Mont.

TOMPKINS, ROBERT A. "Tex," of the Signal Corps at Havana, Aligan, Valdez and Honolulu. Last heard from in Spring of 1915 working for Western Union at Phoenix or Los Angeles.—Address W. S. VAWTER, Arkansas City, Kansas.

CALDWELL, EARL; last heard of en route to Canada. 19 years old, about 5 ft. 9 in., light hair and complexion.—Address C. MELVILLE COTTLE, 539 S. Stanislaus St., Stockton, Calif.

ANDREWS, FRANK LEE: last heard of working at Margarite Theatre, Eureka, Calif. A theatrical mechanic and baker by trade. Red-haired, sandy complexion, 24 years, 6 ft. 2 in. Any one knowing of his whereabouts write.—Address C. B. A., care *Adventure*.

SLOANE, HOWARD K.; or descendants in direct line, will find it of great advantage to communicate with me.—Address H. SUTHERLAND, 37 William St., Newark, N. J.

THE following have been inquired for in full in either February or March issues of *Adventure*. They can get the name of inquirer from this magazine.

ARNOLD, EDWARD A.; Ash, Captain George; Baust, Henry, crossed Everglades 1912; Bedingfield, "Pink"; Bevel, Wiley R.; Bowles, Mrs. Fred; Connors, John or Ed.; Coyle, Arthur, native of Pa.; Cullen, met on Joy line from New York to Providence; Darling, Chas. H.; DeLano, Frank M.; Farnsley, Allie A.; Flanigan, Mr. or Mrs., Altoona, Pa., 1909; Gibson, Arthur E. (Art or Ed); Hager, Robert, last heard from in Honolulu; Hassler, Charles; Heckert, Harry H. or "Texas Joe" Tracy; Hipple, Clyde; Hoffman, A. C.; Hoffman, Albert F., last seen in Centralia, Wash., Aug., 1907; Keene, John; Kellogg, Kenneth (James or Frank Barry); King, Jim, Akron, Mansfield and W. P. Junction; Kopp, Elmer V.; Korns, Paul, Sergt. Shields, Ben Bormer, Henry Pullman, Frank Harrington; Lovell, Jack; Mac, G. F. R.; Merrill, Russell; Murray "Edith," Sydney, Australia, 1902; Nesbit, Henry; Paschall, Hula, last heard of August, 1914; Raymond, George H.; "Reckless Billy;" "Reckless, where are you?" Reed, William; Reid, Blair McD.; Rundle, Edgar; Russell, H. S., formerly of Toronto, Can.; Sargent, Richard Ingalls; Sells, William M.; Underwood, Lew Ellian; Mrs. ———, maiden name Wallace; Williams (Santiago Bill); White, John S.; Whitemore, Francis M.

We'll buy your time this Spring. The plans for our Spring Subscription Campaign call for 300 more men. The opportunity is particularly big in view of our continuing to sell THE DELINEATOR and EVERYBODY'S at present subscription prices.

7 of America's best-known publications have been obliged to increase their prices in the past six months on account of the increased cost of paper. Considering this, the continued offers used in Spring Campaign present the greatest, and easiest-sold magazine values before the public to-day.

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Will Power is the keystone to success. It is the one qualification without which accomplishment in life is impossible. Man can accomplish what he wills—if he sticks to his purpose, but without unswerving determination he hasn't a chance. The will might well be termed the driving force behind the brain.

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Frank Channing Haddock, Ph.D.

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It would take a book as thick as this magazine to carry a full account of the amazing results secured by its users—here, however, are just a few extracts from the thousands of voluntary letters from owners telling what the book has meant to them.

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"I recommended 'Power of Will' to a young man and his salary has increased 800% within a year."—*W. M. Taylor, Efficiency Expert, Willys-Overland Co.*

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"Three years ago I was making $1,500 a year and working day and night. To-day I make $1,000 a week and have time for other things as well. To the lessons in the book 'Power of Will' do I owe this sudden rise."—*(Name on request.)*

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"'Power of Will' is a compilation of mighty forces. My first week's benefit in dollars is $900—cost $3; profit $897."—(Figure what his yearly profit would be.)—*F. W. Heistand, 916 Tribune Bldg., Chicago, Ill.*

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"First few pages enabled me to get 50% raise in salary."—*Robert B. Laird, Douglas, Wyo.*

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"More than a year ago I purchased 'Power of Will' and I firmly believe that it—and it alone—has enabled me to increase my salary more than 50% in that time."—*L. C. Hudgens, Principal Mayhew Consolidated Schools, Boswell, Okla.*

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